Thomas T. Frost

https://www.proz.com/forum/health\_and\_lifestyle\_for\_language\_professionals/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary.html

Member (2014)

Corona quarantine diary

Danish to English

Thread poster: Mervyn Henderson

Masks don't help

Mervyn Henderson

Medical professionals seem to agree that masks don't help because they are designed to prevent germs from being blown out, not prevent them from coming in.

Spain

When you breathe, a lot of air comes in around the edges unfiltered.

Local time: 20:41

They are designed for short-term use, but when people wear them all the time, they end up moist, which makes for a breeding ground for germs.

Member

Keep 1-2 metres' distance to others.

Spanish to English

Use hand sanitiser with 60% alcohol (when you return home).

Mar 15

Wash your hands frequently for as long as it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice.

I thought it might be interesting to offer a Corona Diary, since the vast majority of us are either already cooped up at home, or are about to be.

Use 70% isopropyl alcohol (isopropanol) on wipes ready to use or microfibre cloths to sanitise phones, which are normally full of germs.

Just to see how people are dealing with it, so feel free to join in.

Apple has approved this.

Here’s my kick-off.

Be careful with other products as they can damage the protective layer.

It’s Sunday now, but I had already jotted down a few things for yesterday, Bilbao’s first semi-lockdown day:

Saturday 14 March:

TOPIC STARTER

Normally I’d hit the gym mid-morning, but a message arrived on Friday evening saying it was closed.

Masquerade

That was on the cards, but I’d realised it was only a matter of time, and luckily I’d already picked up my stuff from the locker that afternoon.

Thanks, Thomas.

I realise that, but I don't intend to ever be wearing the mask for long periods.

So I thought I’d do a bit of running later, but first to El Corte Inglés, among other things to cash in one of those vouchers they give you to keep buying and buying and buying, a voucher for 20 euros of canned fish.

And the gloves, well, you come in and you have to wash them, dry them etc.

I’ve already stocked up, but more than anything it was to see what was open and what wasn’t.

I know that something will get through in the end.

I wore my mask and latex gloves.

But looking outside from the balcony, nobody about (OK, a few dog-walkers!!), nothing open, and that's the point - keep everyone isolated for a few weeks, and then we'll see what's what.

The mask’s a pain and the latex doesn’t feel as wanton and sexy on the skin as you might think.

Elizabeth Tamblin

It hasn’t sunk in with a lot of people yet, and I was very conscious of the fact that I was the only one out and about with a mask.

United Kingdom

I’ve probably got the damn thing already, who knows, and I’m asthmatic too, or I was until about 20 years ago, so I don’t want to take any chances.

Local time: 19:41

“Oh look, mummy, that man’s wearing a mask”, a little girl whispered to her mother.

Member (2012)

Well, whispered, but you know the way kids whisper at high volume.

French to English

I half-thought of telling her I’d missed out on the Carnival this year, but what’s the point.

Good thread!

Mummy looked, though, and smiled, a little nervously, I thought.

Why no running, I wonder?

Maybe because Mummy knows she really needs the mask much more than me with children around her.

Samuel Murray

So I felt like a waz in my mask, but still much better being near this kid with the mask on.

Netherlands

I had walked downstairs from our flat too, instead of taking the lift, and upstairs again on foot.

Member (2006)

Can’t be too careful, because there are a few kids in our block, likely as not heaving with coronas, and of course they breathe and sneeze and cough inside the lift, and probably touch parts of it too, so I have to keep an eye on that kind of thing.

English to Afrikaans

PM Sánchez seems to have put the lid on my running idea after his speech to the nation on the news this evening.

SITE LOCALIZER

No running in the park, no visits except to care for relatives, no shops open apart from pharmacies, food outlets, hospitals, bakeries, newspaper kiosks and little else.

@Mervyn and @ Thomas

You can walk your dog, he said, but no running in the park.

Mervyn Henderson wrote:

Nitpickers might ask Mm, so can I run with my dog in the park, but not me.

The Dutch government (whom we trust and whose experts are obviously the best in the world) is taking a very laissez-faire approach to the pandemic and don't seem to think that it's overly serious.

I’m not a socialist, but already the sterile nitpicking and moaning has started, and frankly if I were Sánchez I’d tell them all to grow up and bugger off on live TV.

Essentially, you should stay at home (this includes your own garden) if you have "mild" "cold-like" symptoms (although the government doesn't say what "mild" means or what "cold-like" symptoms are, so I guess it's Wikipedia to the rescue), and you should call the doctor on the telephone if you have a fever of more than something-something, but otherwise it's life as usual.

So it looks like the spare room is going to be turned into a gym, with cords for skipping and litres of milk instead of barbells.

Oh, and you should not go to events where there are old people or lots of other people, "lots" having been defined as 99.

Such is house arrest.

The 99-person rule applies to e.g. music festivals, churches, restaurants, gymnasiums, and swimming pools, but not to grocery stores.

Thomas T. Frost

In my local city, disobeying these rules can officially land you a fine of "up to" €4500 or 3 months in jail, though I'm not sure how that is going to be enforced, or whether people who "got there first" are going to be fined as well, after other people arrive and cause the event to exceed the 99-person limit.

Member (2014)

The 99-person limit does not apply to schools because of the following logic:

Danish to English

the virus is spread mostly by people who have "mild" symptoms, and young people typically either don't get the virus or they get less than "mild" symptoms, so the likeliness of them getting it and spreading it is below the threshold followed by the government and it's experts, and besides, it would hurt the economy unnecessarily if children were kept at home, since many of their parents would then also have to stay at home (yes, the prime minister actually said that during the official announcement of "measures").

Masks don't help

Even before the official announcement of measures this past week, many organisations and news outlets have been advising against shaking hands, and while this was initially replaced with an elbow bump, it seems that most people have settled on a curt nod.

Medical professionals seem to agree that masks don't help because they are designed to prevent germs from being blown out, not prevent them from coming in.

I have not yet seen any increase in waiing.

When you breathe, a lot of air comes in around the edges unfiltered.

As for my own home, we've cancelled the grandparent visits.

They are designed for short-term use, but when people wear them all the time, they end up moist, which makes for a breeding ground for germs.

We have no other specific plans.

Keep 1-2 metres' distance to others.

When we want to go out, we ask ourselves whether we now have "mild" "cold-like" symptoms, and if not, then... we go out.

Use hand sanitiser with 60% alcohol (when you return home).

There has been no increase in handwashing in my home, although I now use only my own towel when drying my hands.

Wash your hands frequently for as long as it takes to sing Happy Birthday twice.

I have not yet cleaned my keyboard or mouse.

Use 70% isopropyl alcohol (isopropanol) on wipes ready to use or microfibre cloths to sanitise phones, which are normally full of germs.

Hay-fever season is early this year, so a lot of people who usually suffer from hay-fever are going to find themselves with "symptoms".

Apple has approved this.

Thomas T. Frost wrote:

Be careful with other products as they can damage the protective layer.

I tried that, but it's easier said than done.

I'm not sure how dangerous it is to be outside that 1-2 meter distance, but apparently most people don't understand how it works and actually walk away from you if you try to close the distance to 1-2 meters.

TOPIC STARTER

Anthony Keily

Masquerade

Italian to English

Thanks, Thomas.

From Lombardy

I realise that, but I don't intend to ever be wearing the mask for long periods.

In my part of Lombardy, it's been three weeks since the first restrictive measures were brought in (schools, cinemas, etc. closed, no sports, no non-essential travel) and we're one week into complete lock-down.

And the gloves, well, you come in and you have to wash them, dry them etc.

People's spirits are good and there's a lot of solidarity out there.

I know that something will get through in the end.

In a way, we stopped shaking hands but are reaching out a lot more in other ways.

But looking outside from the balcony, nobody about (OK, a few dog-walkers!!), nothing open, and that's the point - keep everyone isolated for a few weeks, and then we'll see what's what.

However things are a little grim.

Elizabeth Tamblin

Open the windows and you hear birdsong and ambulances.

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Red Cross teams in the street now and again to make home testing visits.

Local time: 19:41

Yesterday we were told that the public health service, one of the best in the world, is now at breaking point.

Member (2012)

There are simply no more spaces in ICUs.

French to English

Also yesterday we got news of the first personal acquaintance going into intensive care.

Good thread!

This morning my sister-in-law woke with a fever and her sister-in-law (who's a nurse) is ill but can't get tested.

Why no running, I wonder?

The positive thing is that the lock-down is working.

Samuel Murray

Things are really quiet and the experience of the initial red zone in the south-east of Lombardy is encouraging.

Netherlands

They have only a tiny fraction of the new infections they had at the beginning of the month.

Member (2006)

So we just have to sit and wait and take things easy.

English to Afrikaans

The unfortunate fact we're all aware of is that conditions for the health services will continue to deteriorate for a long time after the peak of infections has passed.

SITE LOCALIZER

Air

@Mervyn and @ Thomas

I read somewhere that the virus can survive for a number of hours in the air.

Mervyn Henderson wrote:

If that’s correct, there’s still a risk even if you observe 1-2 metres’ distance, which is definitely more difficult in a city than in a quiet province.

The Dutch government (whom we trust and whose experts are obviously the best in the world) is taking a very laissez-faire approach to the pandemic and don't seem to think that it's overly serious.

Saxony-Anhalt, the former GDR state where I live, was the last German state to get the virus and numbers are still low.

Essentially, you should stay at home (this includes your own garden) if you have "mild" "cold-like" symptoms (although the government doesn't say what "mild" means or what "cold-like" symptoms are, so I guess it's Wikipedia to the rescue), and you should call the doctor on the telephone if you have a fever of more than something-something, but otherwise it's life as usual.

I live in a town with about 8,000 inhabitants, who are generally not international travellers but very local people, so things are still pretty calm here.

Oh, and you should not go to events where there are old people or lots of other people, "lots" having been defined as 99.

For how long is impossible to predict.

The 99-person rule applies to e.g. music festivals, churches, restaurants, gymnasiums, and swimming pools, but not to grocery stores.

I take my precautions anyway.

In my local city, disobeying these rules can officially land you a fine of "up to" €4500 or 3 months in jail, though I'm not sure how that is going to be enforced, or whether people who "got there first" are going to be fined as well, after other people arrive and cause the event to exceed the 99-person limit.

I had two months without work last summer after suffering a retinal detachment on the right eye and then three months without work later in the year when the same happened to the left eye in November – just two weeks after cataract surgery.

The 99-person limit does not apply to schools because of the following logic:

I managed to avoid dipping into my savings after the first operation, but just had to do it a few days ago.

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I was just slowly getting my workflow up and running again when this corona thing hit.

Even before the official announcement of measures this past week, many organisations and news outlets have been advising against shaking hands, and while this was initially replaced with an elbow bump, it seems that most people have settled on a curt nod.

Oh, and I lost €500 a year ago when a German electricity supplier went bust.

I have not yet seen any increase in waiing.

It has been a slightly inconvenient year.

As for my own home, we've cancelled the grandparent visits.

I’ve been doing a few rounds of cost cutting to compensate, so I’m not in a financial disaster zone.

We have no other specific plans.

Most of my revenue is from the US, whose economy is generally in a better shape than the eurozone’s, and most of that is related to home entertainment equipment, which is presumably not the first sector to be hit by a pandemic.

When we want to go out, we ask ourselves whether we now have "mild" "cold-like" symptoms, and if not, then... we go out.

At least the German government has promised guaranteed credits to companies and freelancers to keep them afloat if necessary.

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@Elizabeth

I have not yet cleaned my keyboard or mouse.

Here there's not a ban on running per se, but people are being told to JUST STAY AT HOME AND DON'T GO OUT AT ALL IF POSSIBLE!

Hay-fever season is early this year, so a lot of people who usually suffer from hay-fever are going to find themselves with "symptoms".

In other words, you can go for a run, but it's better not too.

Thomas T. Frost wrote:

And if you do go out you have to carry self-certification to justify your presence out of home to the police.

I tried that, but it's easier said than done.

There are a lot of patrols about enforcing these bans.

I'm not sure how dangerous it is to be outside that 1-2 meter distance, but apparently most people don't understand how it works and actually walk away from you if you try to close the distance to 1-2 meters.

With good weather last week too many people headed for the parks and river banks for walks or runs.

Anthony Keily

Inevitably they stop and greet.

Italian to English

That also means more people on the streets of the town, entering and leaving their buildings and potentially infecting common spaces and door knobs, buzzers, etc..

From Lombardy

The local police had to seal off the parks and send people home.

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expressisverbis

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Portugal

In a way, we stopped shaking hands but are reaching out a lot more in other ways.

Member (2015)

However things are a little grim.

English to Portuguese

Open the windows and you hear birdsong and ambulances.

In Portugal:

Red Cross teams in the street now and again to make home testing visits.

We are in a situation of alert, and people are in panic, too many feelings at this moment.

Yesterday we were told that the public health service, one of the best in the world, is now at breaking point.

There are 169 confirmed cases of COVID-19, one recovered patient and zero deaths, and many suspected cases.

There are simply no more spaces in ICUs.

Most cases are concentrated in the northern region around Porto and, increasingly, in and around the capital of Lisbon.

Also yesterday we got news of the first personal acquaintance going into intensive care.

Portuguese islands of Madeira and the Açores are under strict vigilance.

This morning my sister-in-law woke with a fever and her sister-in-law (who's a nurse) is ill but can't get tested.

Tomorrow, public and private schools will be closed, universities, supermarkets started to implement their restrictions, banks will be working with doors closed, night clubs, bars, cafés, shopping centers, and other social spots will close earlier and under heavy restrictions.

The positive thing is that the lock-down is working.

Yesterday, at 10 pm, people came out to their windows and balconies to applauded health professionals for their work.

Things are really quiet and the experience of the initial red zone in the south-east of Lombardy is encouraging.

I don't have the right words to express what I am felling right now… so…

They have only a tiny fraction of the new infections they had at the beginning of the month.

A very big hug to everyone in the World!

So we just have to sit and wait and take things easy.

Courage and warm thoughts!

The unfortunate fact we're all aware of is that conditions for the health services will continue to deteriorate for a long time after the peak of infections has passed.

ph-b

Air

France

I read somewhere that the virus can survive for a number of hours in the air.

Member (Jan 2020)

If that’s correct, there’s still a risk even if you observe 1-2 metres’ distance, which is definitely more difficult in a city than in a quiet province.

English to French

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Time to...?

I live in a town with about 8,000 inhabitants, who are generally not international travellers but very local people, so things are still pretty calm here.

(random order)

For how long is impossible to predict.

- Read those twenty or so books left from those bought last year but not opened yet,

I take my precautions anyway.

- Learn how to use one or two software programmes,

I had two months without work last summer after suffering a retinal detachment on the right eye and then three months without work later in the year when the same happened to the left eye in November – just two weeks after cataract surgery.

- Tidy up the loft (as in: clear out years of rubbish),

I managed to avoid dipping into my savings after the first operation, but just had to do it a few days ago.

- Think of new ways to get clients (there will still be clients when that thing is over),

I was just slowly getting my workflow up and running again when this corona thing hit.

- Fix that flipping kitchen drawer,

Oh, and I lost €500 a year ago when a German electricity supplier went bust.

- Register with an on-line translation-related course,

It has been a slightly inconvenient year.

- If none available, ...

I’ve been doing a few rounds of cost cutting to compensate, so I’m not in a financial disaster zone.

See more

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Doggone

At least the German government has promised guaranteed credits to companies and freelancers to keep them afloat if necessary.

Sunday 15 March:

@Elizabeth

Put my mask and gloves on and went out, see how far I’d get.

Here there's not a ban on running per se, but people are being told to JUST STAY AT HOME AND DON'T GO OUT AT ALL IF POSSIBLE!

When I saw the two policemen walking towards me, I looked all round me except in their direction, and whistled a couple of times:

In other words, you can go for a run, but it's better not too.

“Here, boy!

And if you do go out you have to carry self-certification to justify your presence out of home to the police.

Here, boy!”

There are a lot of patrols about enforcing these bans.

As they fell into my line of vision, I took the initiative when I saw that quizzical look:

With good weather last week too many people headed for the parks and river banks for walks or runs.

“Oh, hello, officers, just walking the mutt.

Inevitably they stop and greet.

One of the things that Mr. Sánchez still lets us do.

That also means more people on the streets of the town, entering and leaving their buildings and potentially infecting common spaces and door knobs, buzzers, etc..

As you know, of course.”

The local police had to seal off the parks and send people home.

“So where’s the dog?” asked one of them pleasantly.

expressisverbis

“Well, he’s run off.

Portugal

He does that sometimes.

Member (2015)

A right little rascal and no mistake.”

English to Portuguese

“Don’t you know all dogs have to be on a leash in Bilbao, sir?”, said the other one, a little harshly, I thought, marking his card as the Bad Cop.

In Portugal:

“Well, yes, but as I was putting it on, my mask slipped a little, and as I was fixing that, he got free and took off”, I answered, looking around everywhere again.

We are in a situation of alert, and people are in panic, too many feelings at this moment.

“Here, Fido!

There are 169 confirmed cases of COVID-19, one recovered patient and zero deaths, and many suspected cases.

Come here, boy!”

Most cases are concentrated in the northern region around Porto and, increasingly, in and around the capital of Lisbon.

“So where’s the leash?” asked the Good Cop, pointing at my empty gloved hands.

Portuguese islands of Madeira and the Açores are under strict vigilance.

“Well, actually, he ran off with the leash still on him, you see.

Tomorrow, public and private schools will be closed, universities, supermarkets started to implement their restrictions, banks will be working with doors closed, night clubs, bars, cafés, shopping centers, and other social spots will close earlier and under heavy restrictions.

Oh, look, there he is, that terrier over there by the tree, about fifty yards away, see?

Yesterday, at 10 pm, people came out to their windows and balconies to applauded health professionals for their work.

So, sorry about all this, I’ll be on my way then …”

I don't have the right words to express what I am felling right now… so…

“Are you sure that’s your dog, sir?” said Good Cop.

A very big hug to everyone in the World!

“Is that your son?”, pointing over at the tree, where some interfering kid had appeared from nowhere and was petting the dog.

Courage and warm thoughts!

“Yes, I mean no, but Fido’s sociable like that.

ph-b

Look at the little pet.

France

When he wags that funny little stumpy tail of his, what kid could resist stopping to pet him?”

Member (Jan 2020)

I raised my voice a little, moving off towards the tree.

English to French

“Now come on, Fido, less of the larking about, come on now!”

Time to...?

Good Cop smiled, moving with me.

(random order)

“That dog over there doesn’t have a leash, sir.

- Read those twenty or so books left from those bought last year but not opened yet,

Bad Cop stepped up menacingly.

- Learn how to use one or two software programmes,

“You don’t have a dog, do you, sir?”

- Tidy up the loft (as in: clear out years of rubbish),

For crying out loud.

- Think of new ways to get clients (there will still be clients when that thing is over),

So you have to have a dog to be a dog-walker now, do you?

- Fix that flipping kitchen drawer,

“OK”, I sighed, “it’s a fair cop.

- Register with an on-line translation-related course,

No, actually, I’m on my way to buy bread.

- If none available, ...

Basic and/or necessary foodstuffs, like Mr. Sánchez said.

See more

“You just passed a bakery as you were walking towards us, sir”, said Good Cop, nodding across the street.

Doggone

“So why didn’t you go in?”

Sunday 15 March:

“Because I don’t like their bread.

Put my mask and gloves on and went out, see how far I’d get.

I prefer the Labeko bread, from down in the Casco, so really that’s where I’m going.

When I saw the two policemen walking towards me, I looked all round me except in their direction, and whistled a couple of times:

Labeko’s is much tastier and crunchier, and they use a special dough, you know, so that …”.

“Here, boy!

“Come off it”, said Bad Cop.

Here, boy!”

“We can’t help you if you won’t help us, sir.”

As they fell into my line of vision, I took the initiative when I saw that quizzical look:

He sounded like Det. Sgt. Ronnie Brooks from Law and Order UK, only in Spanish.

“Oh, hello, officers, just walking the mutt.

“You’re out and about for no good reason.

One of the things that Mr. Sánchez still lets us do.

You’ve got to get back home right now.

As you know, of course.”

Where do you live, sir?”

“So where’s the dog?” asked one of them pleasantly.

“Just down this street, but actually I’m buying the bread to take to a sick relative down in the Casco.

“Well, he’s run off.

Visits to dependent family members, as Mr. Sánchez said.

He does that sometimes.

Now, I’d really better get going, because I said I’d be there at 11, and it’s almost …”

A right little rascal and no mistake.”

…

“Don’t you know all dogs have to be on a leash in Bilbao, sir?”, said the other one, a little harshly, I thought, marking his card as the Bad Cop.

Escorted back home in the end.

“Well, yes, but as I was putting it on, my mask slipped a little, and as I was fixing that, he got free and took off”, I answered, looking around everywhere again.

NOTE:

“Here, Fido!

This is only to provide some light-heartedness.

Come here, boy!”

Seriously, better to fall into line with what’s going on around Anthony’s neck of the woods.

“So where’s the leash?” asked the Good Cop, pointing at my empty gloved hands.

Here it’s not as bad yet, but it will be if we don’t toe the line.

“Well, actually, he ran off with the leash still on him, you see.

I really don’t need to go out, but like Anthony says, once one person goes out running, everyone will (although I was thinking of doing it at 7 am, so …), and in the end you’ll have a crowd.

Oh, look, there he is, that terrier over there by the tree, about fifty yards away, see?

Today I’m going to concentrate on improving my slightly famous Tolosa beans ‘n’ chorizo stew.

So, sorry about all this, I’ll be on my way then …”

Home, boy

“Are you sure that’s your dog, sir?” said Good Cop.

The police are certainly moving in on dubious dog-walkers and bogus bread-buyers now.

“Is that your son?”, pointing over at the tree, where some interfering kid had appeared from nowhere and was petting the dog.

I've just been told that a group of people hanging around the square near here for no good reason other than sitting around in the sun has been dispersed.

“Yes, I mean no, but Fido’s sociable like that.

Yolande Hivart

Look at the little pet.

Austria

When he wags that funny little stumpy tail of his, what kid could resist stopping to pet him?”

Member (2016)

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German to French

“Now come on, Fido, less of the larking about, come on now!”

In Austria

Good Cop smiled, moving with me.

Here the country had been progressively shutting down all through the past week.

“That dog over there doesn’t have a leash, sir.

As from tomorrow, people can be massively fined if they leave the 4 walls for another reason than to go shopping for groceries (even in mixed supermarkets, they will not be allowed to sell from the other parts than groceries and drugery), go for work or help someone.

Bad Cop stepped up menacingly.

o more trips at the park.

“You don’t have a dog, do you, sir?”

Gatherings of more than 5 people are forbidden if they do not live together.

For crying out loud.

Most stores or companies in contact with client that are not for survival are closed.

So you have to have a dog to be a dog-walker now, do you?

I hope i will still be able to get some ink for my printer from an online store.

“OK”, I sighed, “it’s a fair cop.

On Friday I was shopping around Vienna.

No, actually, I’m on my way to buy bread.

I have heard that on some shops they have been running out of toilet paper for one week now.

Basic and/or necessary foodstuffs, like Mr. Sánchez said.

I was surprised to see that they were running out of fruits and vegetables too.

“You just passed a bakery as you were walking towards us, sir”, said Good Cop, nodding across the street.

People had been shopping so massively that one had to fight to get the last carrots or patatoes (and i am not talking about things like bananas, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, apples, pears...all gone).

“So why didn’t you go in?”

In my part of the country there is still some toilet paper, they ran out of fever thermometer.

“Because I don’t like their bread.

Many people got the chance to be working from home, trains in the non confined parts are still running however somewhat late.

I prefer the Labeko bread, from down in the Casco, so really that’s where I’m going.

Every meeting had been cancelled.

Labeko’s is much tastier and crunchier, and they use a special dough, you know, so that …”.

All through the next week the country will be holding breath.

“Come off it”, said Bad Cop.

I hope there will be some offers in proz for translation, I fear that it will be scarce.

“We can’t help you if you won’t help us, sir.”

Jennifer Forbes

He sounded like Det. Sgt. Ronnie Brooks from Law and Order UK, only in Spanish.

A scene I witnessed a few days ago

“You’re out and about for no good reason.

I was in Boots the pharmacy in my small seaside town in the UK a few days ago and witnessed this:

You’ve got to get back home right now.

a little girl, aged about 3, was quietly picking up cosmetics from a display, licking them and putting them back on the shelf.

Where do you live, sir?”

I noticed her mother (or "carer"?) a couple of display racks further up the shop busy with her mobile phone.

“Just down this street, but actually I’m buying the bread to take to a sick relative down in the Casco.

I approached the mother and pointed out what the little girl was doing.

Visits to dependent family members, as Mr. Sánchez said.

The mother looked, saw what was going on, shrugged and resumed talking on her mobile....

Now, I’d really better get going, because I said I’d be there at 11, and it’s almost …”

Update: Mar 15

…

Number of infected in Portugal rises to 245.

Escorted back home in the end.

3 recovered by now, and 2271 suspected cases.

NOTE:

page-2

This is only to provide some light-heartedness.

IrinaN

Seriously, better to fall into line with what’s going on around Anthony’s neck of the woods.

United States

Here it’s not as bad yet, but it will be if we don’t toe the line.

Local time: 14:48

I really don’t need to go out, but like Anthony says, once one person goes out running, everyone will (although I was thinking of doing it at 7 am, so …), and in the end you’ll have a crowd.

English to Russian

Today I’m going to concentrate on improving my slightly famous Tolosa beans ‘n’ chorizo stew.

Some things are the same here now

Home, boy

Yolande Hivart wrote:

The police are certainly moving in on dubious dog-walkers and bogus bread-buyers now.

So far, I have no problem going shopping anywhere and about to do so for cat food (forgot to include one essential variety in my online order), and a couple more usual things that should still be there but all that crazy shortage seems to be due to the scare of extended supply chain interruptions.

I've just been told that a group of people hanging around the square near here for no good reason other than sitting around in the sun has been dispersed.

We, the Western superpowers and powers, can no longer poop at will without China:-).

Yolande Hivart

Bring manufacturing back to USA!

Austria

There is another explanation to the TP madness:

Member (2016)

When 1 sneezes, 10 around him c\*\*p themselves:-)

German to French

Stay safe but positive.

In Austria

I'm catching a domestic plane next Sunday. Duty calls.

Here the country had been progressively shutting down all through the past week.

Liviu-Lee Roth

As from tomorrow, people can be massively fined if they leave the 4 walls for another reason than to go shopping for groceries (even in mixed supermarkets, they will not be allowed to sell from the other parts than groceries and drugery), go for work or help someone.

Local time: 15:48

o more trips at the park.

Romanian to English

Gatherings of more than 5 people are forbidden if they do not live together.

Disaster in the USA!

Most stores or companies in contact with client that are not for survival are closed.

They CANCELLED all sports events!

I hope i will still be able to get some ink for my printer from an online store.

Oh my!

On Friday I was shopping around Vienna.

No more watching baseball players scratching their crotch;

I have heard that on some shops they have been running out of toilet paper for one week now.

No more hockey players knocking out their teeth;

I was surprised to see that they were running out of fruits and vegetables too.

No more basketball players with more tattoos than a mural;

People had been shopping so massively that one had to fight to get the last carrots or patatoes (and i am not talking about things like bananas, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, apples, pears...all gone).

No more soccer (football) player cursing all the time!

In my part of the country there is still some toilet paper, they ran out of fever thermometer.

No reason to live any longer this boring life!

Many people got the chance to be working from home, trains in the non confined parts are still running however somewhat late.

Aline Amorim

Every meeting had been cancelled.

Brazil

All through the next week the country will be holding breath.

Local time: 16:48

I hope there will be some offers in proz for translation, I fear that it will be scarce.

Member (2019)

Jennifer Forbes

"Corona quarantine diary

A scene I witnessed a few days ago

Here in Brazil National health service: Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS)created an app.

I was in Boots the pharmacy in my small seaside town in the UK a few days ago and witnessed this:

The Ministry of Health has developed an application that provides information about covid-19, the new coronavirus.

a little girl, aged about 3, was quietly picking up cosmetics from a display, licking them and putting them back on the shelf.

The digital platform gathers official information and guidance on symptoms, indicating when it is necessary to go to hospitals.

I noticed her mother (or "carer"?) a couple of display racks further up the shop busy with her mobile phone.

The application has been available since Friday (13.mar2020) for free download on Android phones and Iphone (IOS).

I approached the mother and pointed out what the little girl was doing.

Through geolocation, it indicates the health unit closest to the user.

The mother looked, saw what was going on, shrugged and resumed talking on her mobile....

But it is up to us to be aware of and Brazilian don't take it seriously.

Update: Mar 15

I wonder if they will ever take me seriously!

Number of infected in Portugal rises to 245.

I'm doing my part.

3 recovered by now, and 2271 suspected cases.

Local time: 20:48

page-2

Dutch update

IrinaN

Samuel Murray wrote:

United States

Okay, today more drastic measures were announced: schools, gymnasiums and all restaurants and bars are shutting down until 6 April.

Local time: 14:48

Schools remain open for children whose parents do "essential" duties (e.g. doctors and nurses).

English to Russian

The government and its experts are sticking to their story, however, that shutting down schools will have a negligible effect, but they caved under political pressure. We are still allowed to go out and do shopping etc., but schools and restaurants are now closed.

Some things are the same here now

The restaurant unions are very upset, also because they did not expect this sudden much stricter measure (not to mention, which government believes will have little impact).

Yolande Hivart wrote:

Christel Zipfel

So far, I have no problem going shopping anywhere and about to do so for cat food (forgot to include one essential variety in my online order), and a couple more usual things that should still be there but all that crazy shortage seems to be due to the scare of extended supply chain interruptions.

Member (2004)

We, the Western superpowers and powers, can no longer poop at will without China:-).

Italian to German

Bring manufacturing back to USA!

Welcome back to the Little Translator in the curfewed version!

There is another explanation to the TP madness:

One of the things that Mr. Sánchez still lets us do. As you know, of course.”

When 1 sneezes, 10 around him c\*\*p themselves:-)

[…]

Stay safe but positive.

Thank you so much for providing some light-heartedness, like you say, which we need so much in this situation, and please keep going on!

I'm catching a domestic plane next Sunday. Duty calls.

Best wishes to you and everyone.

Liviu-Lee Roth

Local time: 19:48

Local time: 15:48

UK

Romanian to English

We have been asked to self-isolate if we have a cough or other symptoms of the virus.

We just took the dogs out for their evening walk and met an acquaintance with his dog.

Disaster in the USA!

He informed us that he had a fever and felt dreadful, but wanted to get out in the fresh air for a bit.

They CANCELLED all sports events!

We moved on pretty quickly...

Oh my!

RobinB

No more watching baseball players scratching their crotch;

German to English

No more hockey players knocking out their teeth;

Similar in the United States

No more basketball players with more tattoos than a mural;

Mar 16

No more soccer (football) player cursing all the time!

I was in my local HEB supermarket here in Austin, Texas, this afternoon (one of the best supermarket chains, anywhere), and there were empty aisles where toilet paper, kitchen rolls, canned fruit and veg, prepacked bread, butter(!), eggs, fresh fruit juices, pasta and rice, canned soups and ramen are normally found.

No reason to live any longer this boring life!

Little meat, either. Luckily I wasn't shopping for any of those products.

Aline Amorim

There was still fresh bread, and absolutely no problem with fresh fruit and veg (which maybe says something about the typical diet here).

Brazil

I think it's mainly a supply chain issue.

Local time: 16:48

It's not that there's a real shortage of any of those products, just that the suppliers can't keep up with this demand spike.

Member (2019)

Almost all the toilet paper and kitchen rolls sold in the US are manufactured in North America, for example, with only a small proportion of the bulk paper used to make the products being imported from Asia.

"Corona quarantine diary

And almost all basic foods are produced in North America

Here in Brazil National health service: Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS)created an app.

We had panic buying here a couple of weeks ago, and the shops restocked quite quickly after that, so it will probably be the same this time.

The Ministry of Health has developed an application that provides information about covid-19, the new coronavirus.

And now they're rationing plenty of goods, which they couldn't do earlier for political reasons.

The digital platform gathers official information and guidance on symptoms, indicating when it is necessary to go to hospitals.

Fisher Deng

The application has been available since Friday (13.mar2020) for free download on Android phones and Iphone (IOS).

China

Through geolocation, it indicates the health unit closest to the user.

Local time: 03:48

But it is up to us to be aware of and Brazilian don't take it seriously.

Member (2018)

I wonder if they will ever take me seriously!

English to Chinese

I'm doing my part.

Mask is helpful

Local time: 20:48

Medical professionals seem to agree that masks don't help because they are designed to prevent germs from being blown out, not prevent them from coming in. When you breathe, a lot of air comes in around the edges unfiltered.

Dutch update

In China, everyone is equipped with masks and we're not allowed to enter any public places if no mask.

Samuel Murray wrote:

High-standard masks are preferred, such as N95 and surgical masks, and people are educated to wear masks in an effective way, from the way of putting on and putting down to how often the masks should be replaced, which minimizes the unfiltered edges and risks of getting polluted.

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Facts proved it works!

Schools remain open for children whose parents do "essential" duties (e.g. doctors and nurses).

By far, many provinces in China have continued to achieve zero growth in new cases for days, and contribution of masks is without any doubt.

The government and its experts are sticking to their story, however, that shutting down schools will have a negligible effect, but they caved under political pressure. We are still allowed to go out and do shopping etc., but schools and restaurants are now closed.

yes

The restaurant unions are very upset, also because they did not expect this sudden much stricter measure (not to mention, which government believes will have little impact).

RobinB wrote:

Christel Zipfel

Yes I think too, in our case the summer vegetable in winter comes much from Italy and Spain.

Member (2004)

On that particular supermarket, canned food was not much a problem, rather flour.

Italian to German

There might had been some cooking grandmas around, pun aside.

Welcome back to the Little Translator in the curfewed version!

Toilet paper is rather a fashion thing, even with hoarding things, you can not use more than you need (unless you misunderstand the purpose).

One of the things that Mr. Sánchez still lets us do. As you know, of course.”

Whoever buys 6 packages at once will leave the rest of the production to the others for quite a while.

[…]

Josephine Cassar

Thank you so much for providing some light-heartedness, like you say, which we need so much in this situation, and please keep going on!

Not exactly

Best wishes to you and everyone.

Fisher Deng wrote:

Local time: 19:48

A Chinese medical expert who has gone to Italy explained that a mask is only helpful as it prevents sneezing or coughing droplets from falling onto objects/people/surfaces but is actually a hindrance as people have to adjust it continually so they touch their faces more often.

UK

Touching one's face is not recommended as the virus passes through the nose, mouth and eyes.

We have been asked to self-isolate if we have a cough or other symptoms of the virus.

Give consideration to each other

We just took the dogs out for their evening walk and met an acquaintance with his dog.

Josephine Cassar wrote:

He informed us that he had a fever and felt dreadful, but wanted to get out in the fresh air for a bit.

Avoiding touching one's face is surely of great importance，but to prevent droplets can‘t be ignored as well.

We moved on pretty quickly...

After all, coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread by respiratory droplets and contact(and fecal-oral transmission), people shouldn't merely pay attention to face touching and lose sight of droplets preventing.

RobinB

The thing we should focus on is how to effectively wear masks while also avoid touching face, which is hard enough even without masks.

German to English

Face masks (again)

Similar in the United States

Bear in mind that currently there are severe shortages of high-quality face masks and PPE in general in hospitals around Europe due to the demand from the general population.

Mar 16

Face masks are essential for healthcare workers and symptomatic patients, while their usefulness for non-symptomatic individuals taking all other precautions is much more limited.

I was in my local HEB supermarket here in Austin, Texas, this afternoon (one of the best supermarket chains, anywhere), and there were empty aisles where toilet paper, kitchen rolls, canned fruit and veg, prepacked bread, butter(!), eggs, fresh fruit juices, pasta and rice, canned soups and ramen are normally found.

(A number of public health authorities, including the Italian ISS, do not recommend use of face masks by the general population at this point).

Little meat, either. Luckily I wasn't shopping for any of those products.

Neptunia

There was still fresh bread, and absolutely no problem with fresh fruit and veg (which maybe says something about the typical diet here).

a point-of-view from outside of Florence, Italy

I think it's mainly a supply chain issue.

Here's my impression - I've been watching the coronavirus news with alarm since mid-January and it felt like a tsunami coming that most people weren't paying attention to.

It's not that there's a real shortage of any of those products, just that the suppliers can't keep up with this demand spike.

Maybe I've just always been the type to be on the lookout for the apocalypse!

Almost all the toilet paper and kitchen rolls sold in the US are manufactured in North America, for example, with only a small proportion of the bulk paper used to make the products being imported from Asia.

It was a huge relief when they finally closed schools nationwide and then shut down pretty much everything else.

And almost all basic foods are produced in North America

I trust the government on this (strangely) and believe this is absolutely warranted and will be effective.

We had panic buying here a couple of weeks ago, and the shops restocked quite quickly after that, so it will probably be the same this time.

(I am very afraid for the disorganized and late response in my home country, the USA.)

And now they're rationing plenty of goods, which they couldn't do earlier for political reasons.

The first community transmission in Italy was noticed on Feb 20 - less than a month ago, and now as of March 16 we have 24,747 cases and 1809 deaths.

Fisher Deng

That is more than 7% and that assumes everyone sick today will live, which clearly can't be.

China

In fact, the survival rate for people put in ICU on respirators for other problems (pre-covid19) is 50% so by my estimation, the Italian fatality rate will be at least 10%.

Local time: 03:48

Tell me why my numbers are wrong please!

Member (2018)

I haven't heard anyone explain this except for vague suggestions that the population in Italy is older than South Korea, for example, where they have done an astonishingly good job of arresting the spread and saving lives.

English to Chinese

In China I'm afraid they only counted people who fit into the hospitals and the people who died at home were not part of the statistics.

Mask is helpful

Anyway, my daily life is almost normal.

Medical professionals seem to agree that masks don't help because they are designed to prevent germs from being blown out, not prevent them from coming in. When you breathe, a lot of air comes in around the edges unfiltered.

I am always at home anyway. Having the kiddies underfoot was really hard last week because I had a big job and was not counting on all the interruptions, but I got through it.

In China, everyone is equipped with masks and we're not allowed to enter any public places if no mask.

The remote schoolwork has been a bit ridiculous.

High-standard masks are preferred, such as N95 and surgical masks, and people are educated to wear masks in an effective way, from the way of putting on and putting down to how often the masks should be replaced, which minimizes the unfiltered edges and risks of getting polluted.

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Just the imaginary pressure of the ticking timer spurred him to work and what had taken him 5 hours the previous day took half an hour.

yes

Phew!

RobinB wrote:

I didn't have time last week to fully supervise my 3-year old who also has homework, if you can believe it.

Yes I think too, in our case the summer vegetable in winter comes much from Italy and Spain.

The nursery school is nuts.

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(Not that she doesn't have many other coloring books, but having her teacher send her an assignment had a certain novelty).

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Josephine Cassar

Lots of people were wearing masks.

Not exactly

I juiced up some wipes at home with 91% isopropanol and wiped down the shopping cart and then wore the disposable plastic gloves they always have in the fruit and veggie area.

Fisher Deng wrote:

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Give consideration to each other

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The new case growth in Italy looks linear, not exponential at this point.

The thing we should focus on is how to effectively wear masks while also avoid touching face, which is hard enough even without masks.

Hoping for the best.

Face masks (again)

The economy will recover, but the dead people won't, so let's all stay home and stay safe!

Bear in mind that currently there are severe shortages of high-quality face masks and PPE in general in hospitals around Europe due to the demand from the general population.

Andrew Morris

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ProZ.com team

(A number of public health authorities, including the Italian ISS, do not recommend use of face masks by the general population at this point).

Not as funny as your diary, but...

Neptunia

I found this a relatively sane and simple article.

a point-of-view from outside of Florence, Italy

https://www.bbc.com/news/health-51214864?fbclid=IwAR0yOOaHnI3TP-bqmDVORCuGTWQEX4Tr1egQrltBsfQTc12E3JTZU6h0eK8

Here's my impression - I've been watching the coronavirus news with alarm since mid-January and it felt like a tsunami coming that most people weren't paying attention to.

So it seems most human immune systems will fight it off easily enough unless you have ...er...asthma or ...ahem, a heart condition.

Maybe I've just always been the type to be on the lookout for the apocalypse!

I'm on a one-man mission to exorcise the coronary (sic) virus.

It was a huge relief when they finally closed schools nationwide and then shut down pretty much everything else.

My heart attack was exactly one month ago, making this the mensiverary.

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I'm just happy to be alive, virus or no...

(I am very afraid for the disorganized and late response in my home country, the USA.)

Maria Gray

The first community transmission in Italy was noticed on Feb 20 - less than a month ago, and now as of March 16 we have 24,747 cases and 1809 deaths.

Solidarity from the window

That is more than 7% and that assumes everyone sick today will live, which clearly can't be.

Firstly, Marvyn, I wanted to reply as I am also here in Bilbao, so sending moral support from the window!

In fact, the survival rate for people put in ICU on respirators for other problems (pre-covid19) is 50% so by my estimation, the Italian fatality rate will be at least 10%.

I know this may not seem like much with what is going on but as Spain is now on lock-down across the country 2000 becomes an emotional moment.

Tell me why my numbers are wrong please!

The campaign is for everyone to go to their balconies, windows or doors at 2000 and start clapping, to let those working to fight this virus know how much we appreciate them: hospital staff, vaccine researchers, supermarket cashiers, and many more of course.

I haven't heard anyone explain this except for vague suggestions that the population in Italy is older than South Korea, for example, where they have done an astonishingly good job of arresting the spread and saving lives.

When we're at home all day, looking out of the window and only occasionally see someone throwing out their rubbish or walking their dog, in streets that are usually so full of life;

In China I'm afraid they only counted people who fit into the hospitals and the people who died at home were not part of the statistics.

to look outside at 2000 and hear clapping and cheering all around and people's lights flashing on and off as far as the eye can see, all in a sign of solidarity, is something truly emotional.

Anyway, my daily life is almost normal.

We are in this together folks, and we'll beat it together.

I am always at home anyway. Having the kiddies underfoot was really hard last week because I had a big job and was not counting on all the interruptions, but I got through it.

page-3

The remote schoolwork has been a bit ridiculous.

Elizabeth Tamblin

My 7-year old has a ton and will do anything to avoid it, squirming constantly, sticking things up his nose, dropping his pen, etc.

Local time: 19:54

Finally, I put an egg timer in front of him and it helped tremendously.

A yearly thing?

Just the imaginary pressure of the ticking timer spurred him to work and what had taken him 5 hours the previous day took half an hour.

According to the UK Government's chief scientific officer, this virus is likely to come back year after year. Is social isolation to be the new way of life for months every year?

Phew!

I can't see how the economy will recover if that is the case.

I didn't have time last week to fully supervise my 3-year old who also has homework, if you can believe it.

[Edited at 2020-03-16 10:54 GMT]

The nursery school is nuts.

Masks Mar 16

I did print out a couple of the coloring pages they sent and she set to work with enthusiasm.

In China, everyone is equipped with masks and we're not allowed to enter any public places if no mask. High-standard masks are preferred, such as N95 and surgical masks, and people are educated to wear masks in an effective way, from the way of putting on and putting down to how often the masks should be replaced, which minimizes the unfiltered edges and risks of getting polluted. Facts proved it works!

(Not that she doesn't have many other coloring books, but having her teacher send her an assignment had a certain novelty).

I'm not qualified in medicine, but all the advice I've seen outside China is that masks are not effective. See for example this article, which refers to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): https://time.com/5794729/coronavirus-face-masks/

I went out only once last week, to the supermarket.

I know China made it mandatory to use masks, but that doesn't mean it's based on scientific advice. It's probably more of a habit in Asia, which we usually don't see in the West. Remember that the Chinese authorities also bullied the first doctor to warn about this virus. Why would they do that if they only based their decisions on science?

I went early in the morning, expecting it to be empty, but it took about 45 mins just to get in the store as we had to line up outside and were constantly reminded to keep our distance.

The mask obligation looks more like a political decision.

Lots of people were wearing masks.

I have not seen any facts that proved that masks worked. It seems more likely that it is the draconian restrictions on movement that worked.

I juiced up some wipes at home with 91% isopropanol and wiped down the shopping cart and then wore the disposable plastic gloves they always have in the fruit and veggie area.

But if you can point us to any articles based on scientific facts and medical advice that recommends masks, it would be appreciated.

There were no particular shortages (except they hadn't stocked the carrots yet) and I've been buying a little extra of whatever non-perishables we use for weeks now, so it wasn't a huge cartload.

Vaccine Mar 16

I didn't wear a mask though because it isn't mandatory and I believe it doesn't keep you safe.

Elizabeth Tamblin wrote:

I do happen to have a couple of N95 FFP1 masks, an organic solvent respirator (won't help against viruses but looks scary!) and some surgical masks, but am not sure I will need to wear them.

Hopefully a vaccine will be developed and included in the annual flu shot. A flu can cost a lot of money for a freelancer, so I've been vaccinated the last 20 years (and not had the flu since).

I don't think it is possible to buy masks anywhere!

Mervyn Henderson

Anyway, we are hanging in there. We watch for the new numbers every evening and my husband keeps a giant excel spreadsheet of the data.

Local time: 20:54

I think the Italian case peak is supposed to be at the end of this week.

Monday Mar 16

The new case growth in Italy looks linear, not exponential at this point.

Monday 16 March:

Hoping for the best.

Didn’t go out running. The news last night showed footage of a female jogger intercepted by the police down in Madrid or somewhere, and shooed off home. I have a home exercise plan anyway, which may or may not include walking up and down the stairs repeatedly (fourth floor). Two birds with one stone, (1) the exercise and (2) not using the death trap that our lift most likely is by now. And during the day, too, so I don’t have to touch the time-delay light switch on the landings either.

The economy will recover, but the dead people won't, so let's all stay home and stay safe!

Our neighbours said yesterday (via Radio Balcony) their Scottish terrier is available for general proxy “walking”!

Andrew Morris

Even if they were serious, though, you would undertake the obligation of having to throw them down some bog roll in return further down the line. All this talk about toilet rolls is making me paranoid. I even counted them yesterday. Should have enough. But how many are enough?

ProZ.com team

Most of Venezuela has done without them for a year or so now. What is it with toilet rolls?

Not as funny as your diary, but...

A WhatsApp’s doing the rounds with a suggestion for broccoli as a last-resort substitute. They admit it rasps more than the see-through squares with nasty dots and flecks and bits you might expect to find in a Pyongyang inner city tenement, and of course the clumps tend to break off. No test-drive pictures, thankfully.

I found this a relatively sane and simple article.

Is it just my imagination, or are the Internet and messages and systems in general getting clunkier, maybe because traffic volumes have skyrocketed?

https://www.bbc.com/news/health-51214864?fbclid=IwAR0yOOaHnI3TP-bqmDVORCuGTWQEX4Tr1egQrltBsfQTc12E3JTZU6h0eK8

There was a car going around this morning with a PA crackling some message or other, like during the elections, but I couldn’t make out if they were saying “Keep off the streets, everyone”, “Use toilet paper responsibly”, “Broccoli half price all week” or “Vote PNV”.

So it seems most human immune systems will fight it off easily enough unless you have ...er...asthma or ...ahem, a heart condition.

Another job just in – guess what the subject is?

I'm on a one-man mission to exorcise the coronary (sic) virus.

Yes, Covid 19. Big business is getting flustered. Won’t be long before they have Coronavirus Departments.

My heart attack was exactly one month ago, making this the mensiverary.

Hysterical Mar 16

I'm just happy to be alive, virus or no...

The news last night showed footage of a female jogger intercepted by the police down in Madrid or somewhere, and shooed off home.

Maria Gray

Seems completely hysterical. The thing is to avoid contact with other people, but how would running in fresh air endanger anyone?

Solidarity from the window

That sort of restriction will just make people more hysterical than they are already.

Firstly, Marvyn, I wanted to reply as I am also here in Bilbao, so sending moral support from the window!

As Anthony said .. Mar 16

I know this may not seem like much with what is going on but as Spain is now on lock-down across the country 2000 becomes an emotional moment.

... when the good weather came along in Italy, people started jogging, and greeting each other, crowds formed etc. and one thing led to another. It's raining here now, but by Wednesday it will have cleared up, so the temptation is there.

The campaign is for everyone to go to their balconies, windows or doors at 2000 and start clapping, to let those working to fight this virus know how much we appreciate them: hospital staff, vaccine researchers, supermarket cashiers, and many more of course.

Thomas Pfann

When we're at home all day, looking out of the window and only occasionally see someone throwing out their rubbish or walking their dog, in streets that are usually so full of life;

English to German

to look outside at 2000 and hear clapping and cheering all around and people's lights flashing on and off as far as the eye can see, all in a sign of solidarity, is something truly emotional.

You either enforce it or you don't Mar 16

We are in this together folks, and we'll beat it together.

No. The point is to enforce the lockdown. If they do not enforce it now (even if it feels silly and over the top) then they might just as well forget about the whole thing and end the quarantine.

page-3

If that jogger is allowed to enjoy the park, then a few parents with their children should be allowed in the park as well. And those pensioners sitting in the sun for a chat. And if they can sit in the park then why not a cafe or a bar. And so on. That defeats the whole purpose of the lockdown.

Elizabeth Tamblin

2 more...

Local time: 19:54

María Paula Gorgone

A yearly thing?

Norway

According to the UK Government's chief scientific officer, this virus is likely to come back year after year. Is social isolation to be the new way of life for months every year?

English to Spanish

I can't see how the economy will recover if that is the case.

Freelance life Mar 16

[Edited at 2020-03-16 10:54 GMT]

I have heard that on some shops they have been running out of toilet paper for one week now. I was surprised to see that they were running out of fruits and vegetables too. People had been shopping so massively that one had to fight to get the last carrots or patatoes (and i am not talking about things like bananas, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, apples, pears...all gone).

Masks Mar 16

I was in my local HEB supermarket here in Austin, Texas, this afternoon (one of the best supermarket chains, anywhere), and there were empty aisles where toilet paper, kitchen rolls, canned fruit and veg, prepacked bread, butter(!), eggs, fresh fruit juices, pasta and rice, canned soups and ramen are normally found. Little meat, either. Luckily I wasn't shopping for any of those products. There was still fresh bread, and absolutely no problem with fresh fruit and veg (which maybe says something about the typical diet here).

In China, everyone is equipped with masks and we're not allowed to enter any public places if no mask. High-standard masks are preferred, such as N95 and surgical masks, and people are educated to wear masks in an effective way, from the way of putting on and putting down to how often the masks should be replaced, which minimizes the unfiltered edges and risks of getting polluted. Facts proved it works!

I think it's mainly a supply chain issue. It's not that there's a real shortage of any of those products, just that the suppliers can't keep up with this demand spike. Almost all the toilet paper and kitchen rolls sold in the US are manufactured in North America, for example, with only a small proportion of the bulk paper used to make the products being imported from Asia. And almost all basic foods are produced in North America

I'm not qualified in medicine, but all the advice I've seen outside China is that masks are not effective. See for example this article, which refers to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): https://time.com/5794729/coronavirus-face-masks/

We had panic buying here a couple of weeks ago, and the shops restocked quite quickly after that, so it will probably be the same this time. And now they're rationing plenty of goods, which they couldn't do earlier for political reasons.

I know China made it mandatory to use masks, but that doesn't mean it's based on scientific advice. It's probably more of a habit in Asia, which we usually don't see in the West. Remember that the Chinese authorities also bullied the first doctor to warn about this virus. Why would they do that if they only based their decisions on science?

Same experience in my local HEB (I'm in College Station, just a few hours from Austin)... I really could not get why people got so crazy about the toilet paper, and why stores were not putting a limit to how many you could buy. (I'm not from the USA, I'm only here for a year, actually, I am supposed to move back home to Norway in the end of April, talk about timing...) Now it makes a bit more sense from what you say.

The mask obligation looks more like a political decision.

My social media and communication apps have experienced a peak of articles such as "How to survive working from home", "Tips on how to work from home and keep a routine", etc... At least that's ONE thing we freelancers don't have to adapt to, I guess.

I have not seen any facts that proved that masks worked. It seems more likely that it is the draconian restrictions on movement that worked.

Sensible measures Mar 16

But if you can point us to any articles based on scientific facts and medical advice that recommends masks, it would be appreciated.

[quote]Thomas Pfann wrote:

Vaccine Mar 16

There is a very major difference between being in open air and in a confined space in a cafe – particularly if it's a lone jogger.

Elizabeth Tamblin wrote:

I'm all for sensible precautions, and perhaps banning outdoor activities are more necessary in some cultures than others.

Hopefully a vaccine will be developed and included in the annual flu shot. A flu can cost a lot of money for a freelancer, so I've been vaccinated the last 20 years (and not had the flu since).

But fresh air and sunlight are generally beneficial in the fight against illness, so overly draconian bans could be counterproductive.

Mervyn Henderson

Mind you, some such bans may be intended to make it look as if the governments act decisively – after they had failed to take timely precautions. European countries have generally waited until the virus had spread before doing anything. It would have been more effective to act before the virus had spread.

Local time: 20:54

Then change the rules for all, not let each of us decide which rules we want to follow Mar 16

Monday Mar 16

Yep. I agree with all of this. Nothing of it has anything to do with the lone jogger being expelled from the park, though.

Monday 16 March:

The Misha

Didn’t go out running. The news last night showed footage of a female jogger intercepted by the police down in Madrid or somewhere, and shooed off home. I have a home exercise plan anyway, which may or may not include walking up and down the stairs repeatedly (fourth floor). Two birds with one stone, (1) the exercise and (2) not using the death trap that our lift most likely is by now. And during the day, too, so I don’t have to touch the time-delay light switch on the landings either.

Local time: 15:54

Our neighbours said yesterday (via Radio Balcony) their Scottish terrier is available for general proxy “walking”!

Russian to English

Even if they were serious, though, you would undertake the obligation of having to throw them down some bog roll in return further down the line. All this talk about toilet rolls is making me paranoid. I even counted them yesterday. Should have enough. But how many are enough?

I mean, really, folks, what's all this business about toilet paper?

Most of Venezuela has done without them for a year or so now. What is it with toilet rolls?

It's not like that damn bug makes you p...p double or triple, right?

A WhatsApp’s doing the rounds with a suggestion for broccoli as a last-resort substitute. They admit it rasps more than the see-through squares with nasty dots and flecks and bits you might expect to find in a Pyongyang inner city tenement, and of course the clumps tend to break off. No test-drive pictures, thankfully.

Back at the time when I was still growing up unhappily in the workers' and peasants' paradise, there was this ever-popular joke about entire rail car loads of toilet paper disappearing without a trace here and there because it was purportedly used as an ingredient in cheap bologna sausage. Which, they claimed, was the reason why there was never enough toilet paper to be had and the sausage was so lousy. In all fair... See more

Is it just my imagination, or are the Internet and messages and systems in general getting clunkier, maybe because traffic volumes have skyrocketed?

Erik Freitag

There was a car going around this morning with a PA crackling some message or other, like during the elections, but I couldn’t make out if they were saying “Keep off the streets, everyone”, “Use toilet paper responsibly”, “Broccoli half price all week” or “Vote PNV”.

Germany

Another job just in – guess what the subject is?

Dutch to German

Yes, Covid 19. Big business is getting flustered. Won’t be long before they have Coronavirus Departments.

Herd immunity Mar 16

Hysterical Mar 16

No expert here, but as far as I understand it, a recurring virus is far less dangerous. By next year, a large part of the population will already have gone through the disease and are likely to be immune. The number of infected people will be much smaller. This means more safety for non-immune persons, too. The lower number of cases means that the situation will be much less likely to significantly stress healthcare systems.

The news last night showed footage of a female jogger intercepted by the police down in Madrid or somewhere, and shooed off home.

All this is even before any drugs or vaccines are ready for the market. Think of it as just another - albeit slightly more dangerous - form of the yearly flu: Still dangerous, but quite manageable.

Seems completely hysterical. The thing is to avoid contact with other people, but how would running in fresh air endanger anyone?

Local time: 14:54

That sort of restriction will just make people more hysterical than they are already.

True state of things Mar 16

As Anthony said .. Mar 16

Mother Nature produced a slightest grin, no wider than Mona Lisa's, and look what the mankind (oh my, by all means, womenkind included is reduced to in the middle of the 21st century.

... when the good weather came along in Italy, people started jogging, and greeting each other, crowds formed etc. and one thing led to another. It's raining here now, but by Wednesday it will have cleared up, so the temptation is there.

It's viruses, not money and not humans, who are on top of the food chain. Today it's a small-scale exercise compared to what can happen if She unleashes her might for real some day. Stockpiling weapons, be it on a personal or government level, toilet paper and Ramen noodles will not help much.

Thomas Pfann

I didn't panic myself into a doomsday :-) Mar 16

English to German

However furious I might be at the moment over all my spring/summer plans crumbling away faster than a shortbread biscuit.

You either enforce it or you don't Mar 16

What I am trying to say is that if this lesson will not be enough to think about re-distribution of global resources to peaceful science, education and protection of the entire human race, then Terminator was right: self-destruction is in our nature (and we hardly deserve the planet we live on). Every time I hear "in a wake of" from the big dudes facing global crises, I'm about to explode. Turn your darn snooze button off!

No. The point is to enforce the lockdown. If they do not enforce it now (even if it feels silly and over the top) then they might just as well forget about the whole thing and end the quarantine.

But I'm a very down-to-earth person and inclined to believe that as soon as this wave flattens, which it sure will, and DOW goes up, we'll be back to square one. Or, maybe, with a vaccine for 1 more nasty thing... out of what?

If that jogger is allowed to enjoy the park, then a few parents with their children should be allowed in the park as well. And those pensioners sitting in the sun for a chat. And if they can sit in the park then why not a cafe or a bar. And so on. That defeats the whole purpose of the lockdown.

Thousands?

2 more...

Millions?

María Paula Gorgone

To how many will it be available?

Norway

Tuesday 17 March Mar 17

English to Spanish

Went out to the supermarket, only two minutes from here. Who should turn up not ten yards from me but Good Cop and Bad Cop ...

Freelance life Mar 16

“Good morning, sir. Fancy seeing you here”, trilled Bad Cop. And, surely I had to be mistaken, but was that a twinkle in his eye?

I have heard that on some shops they have been running out of toilet paper for one week now. I was surprised to see that they were running out of fruits and vegetables too. People had been shopping so massively that one had to fight to get the last carrots or patatoes (and i am not talking about things like bananas, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, apples, pears...all gone).

Had I got them mixed up?

I was in my local HEB supermarket here in Austin, Texas, this afternoon (one of the best supermarket chains, anywhere), and there were empty aisles where toilet paper, kitchen rolls, canned fruit and veg, prepacked bread, butter(!), eggs, fresh fruit juices, pasta and rice, canned soups and ramen are normally found. Little meat, either. Luckily I wasn't shopping for any of those products. There was still fresh bread, and absolutely no problem with fresh fruit and veg (which maybe says something about the typical diet here).

No, it was Bad Cop for sure. Something wasn’t right.

I think it's mainly a supply chain issue. It's not that there's a real shortage of any of those products, just that the suppliers can't keep up with this demand spike. Almost all the toilet paper and kitchen rolls sold in the US are manufactured in North America, for example, with only a small proportion of the bulk paper used to make the products being imported from Asia. And almost all basic foods are produced in North America

Then I noticed that Good Cop (for it was he) was looking me up and down in only thinly veiled disgust:

We had panic buying here a couple of weeks ago, and the shops restocked quite quickly after that, so it will probably be the same this time. And now they're rationing plenty of goods, which they couldn't do earlier for political reasons.

“Well, well, well, blow me down if it isn’t the Man with the Invisible Dog. Out for walkies with that cheeky little imp?

Same experience in my local HEB (I'm in College Station, just a few hours from Austin)... I really could not get why people got so crazy about the toilet paper, and why stores were not putting a limit to how many you could buy. (I'm not from the USA, I'm only here for a year, actually, I am supposed to move back home to Norway in the end of April, talk about timing...) Now it makes a bit more sense from what you say.

Eagerly relieving himself against a lamp post somewhere, eh?

My social media and communication apps have experienced a peak of articles such as "How to survive working from home", "Tips on how to work from home and keep a routine", etc... At least that's ONE thing we freelancers don't have to adapt to, I guess.

Squeezing one out in the soft earth around a tree?

Sensible measures Mar 16

Is that what he’s up to, sir?

[quote]Thomas Pfann wrote:

Is it?

There is a very major difference between being in open air and in a confined space in a cafe – particularly if it's a lone jogger.

Eh?

I'm all for sensible precautions, and perhaps banning outdoor activities are more necessary in some cultures than others.

Got a little bag to clean up after him, have we, sir?”

But fresh air and sunlight are generally beneficial in the fight against illness, so overly draconian bans could be counterproductive.

He cast glances all around him.

Mind you, some such bans may be intended to make it look as if the governments act decisively – after they had failed to take timely precautions. European countries have generally waited until the virus had spread before doing anything. It would have been more effective to act before the virus had spread.

Naughty boy!

Then change the rules for all, not let each of us decide which rules we want to follow Mar 16

You get back to heel this minute, do you hear me?

Yep. I agree with all of this. Nothing of it has anything to do with the lone jogger being expelled from the park, though.

Off to bed tonight with no Kibbles ‘n’ Bits, is that what you want, me old son?”

The Misha

He brought his face up to mine. Well, I say that, but really it was still around the regulatory metre and a bit, of course, but close enough for me.

Local time: 15:54

“Er …”, I said. “Weren’t you … aren’t you … weren’t you, mm, Good Cop before?”

Russian to English

The other one put a gloved hand on his arm.

I mean, really, folks, what's all this business about toilet paper?

“I’m dreadfully sorry about this, sir,” said Bad Cop, with a wan smile.

It's not like that damn bug makes you p...p double or triple, right?

Well, I mean Good Cop, I suppose. Or did I?

Back at the time when I was still growing up unhappily in the workers' and peasants' paradise, there was this ever-popular joke about entire rail car loads of toilet paper disappearing without a trace here and there because it was purportedly used as an ingredient in cheap bologna sausage. Which, they claimed, was the reason why there was never enough toilet paper to be had and the sausage was so lousy. In all fair... See more

Maybe I was losing the plot. He turned to Good Cop. Or Bad Cop, rather:

Erik Freitag

“Come on, Iker.”

Germany

Good Cop’s shoulders came down, and his features relaxed.

Dutch to German

“Well, yes, you see, it’s my turn today. We agreed to take it turn about, Eneko and me. Eneko can handle it – he just toughs up a bit, plays the hard man, and forgets about it later. I’m a normal kind of guy. But I go into overkill when it’s my turn for Bad Cop, me. I just want to kick ten kinds of shit out of anything that moves. They talk about the health service heroes having a bad time. They get applause from the balconies every night at 8 pm. What about us?

Herd immunity Mar 16

What about the coppers?

No expert here, but as far as I understand it, a recurring virus is far less dangerous. By next year, a large part of the population will already have gone through the disease and are likely to be immune. The number of infected people will be much smaller. This means more safety for non-immune persons, too. The lower number of cases means that the situation will be much less likely to significantly stress healthcare systems.

What about the rozzers?

All this is even before any drugs or vaccines are ready for the market. Think of it as just another - albeit slightly more dangerous - form of the yearly flu: Still dangerous, but quite manageable.

What about the pigs?

Local time: 14:54

What about the filth?

True state of things Mar 16

What about the bollocks we have to take, day in day out?

Mother Nature produced a slightest grin, no wider than Mona Lisa's, and look what the mankind (oh my, by all means, womenkind included is reduced to in the middle of the 21st century.

Even before all this coronavirus stuff. Who has to help all those little old ladies across the road?

It's viruses, not money and not humans, who are on top of the food chain. Today it's a small-scale exercise compared to what can happen if She unleashes her might for real some day. Stockpiling weapons, be it on a personal or government level, toilet paper and Ramen noodles will not help much.

Who has to tell people what time it is all bloody day long?

I didn't panic myself into a doomsday :-) Mar 16

Who has to move on the winos lying in shop doorways?

However furious I might be at the moment over all my spring/summer plans crumbling away faster than a shortbread biscuit.

Who has to wade into a seedy joint full of dangerous crackheads and smackheads smashing the place up, and sort it all out?

What I am trying to say is that if this lesson will not be enough to think about re-distribution of global resources to peaceful science, education and protection of the entire human race, then Terminator was right: self-destruction is in our nature (and we hardly deserve the planet we live on). Every time I hear "in a wake of" from the big dudes facing global crises, I'm about to explode. Turn your darn snooze button off!

Who has to take those crumpled torn bodies out of the dumpsters?

But I'm a very down-to-earth person and inclined to believe that as soon as this wave flattens, which it sure will, and DOW goes up, we'll be back to square one. Or, maybe, with a vaccine for 1 more nasty thing... out of what?

Who has to knock on the door and tell them someone won’t be coming home from school today?

Thousands?

Who has to leap on to the landing gear of a plane just as it takes off, somehow struggle up into the hold, and proceed to take out twenty-odd members of a sinister terrorist organisation all armed to the teeth one by one, ripping the soles of his bare feet to bloody shreds on broken glass as he strangles, stabs and neck-snaps his way through the lot of them, but still with the wherewithal to think up constant deadpan, grim yet vaguely amusing derring-do one-liners to growl into the walkie-talkie to the fat black cop down below at air traffic control?

Millions?

Who has to …?”

To how many will it be available?

“Iker”, said his mate gently, “you’ve got to get a grip on yourself, lad. You don’t want another mandatory six months with the psychologist every day, do you?

Tuesday 17 March Mar 17

And you’ve been watching that Die Hard video again, right?

Went out to the supermarket, only two minutes from here. Who should turn up not ten yards from me but Good Cop and Bad Cop ...

You have, haven’t you?

“Good morning, sir. Fancy seeing you here”, trilled Bad Cop. And, surely I had to be mistaken, but was that a twinkle in his eye?

I told you about that, didn’t I?”

Had I got them mixed up?

Iker chewed his lip.

No, it was Bad Cop for sure. Something wasn’t right.

“OK,” he said slowly. “But it’s nearly end of shift now. My turn tomorrow, Eneko. My turn for Good Cop.”

Then I noticed that Good Cop (for it was he) was looking me up and down in only thinly veiled disgust:

He shrugged.

“Well, well, well, blow me down if it isn’t the Man with the Invisible Dog. Out for walkies with that cheeky little imp?

“I can’t help it. It all started when Sergeant Garmendia\* went AWOL ages ago. Garmendia would know what to do.”

Eagerly relieving himself against a lamp post somewhere, eh?

“That’s the spirit,” Eneko told him, and turned to me:

Squeezing one out in the soft earth around a tree?

“So you aren’t walking the dog that isn’t there, are you, sir?”

Is that what he’s up to, sir?

“Oh no. I’m going to the supermarket, see if they have any cans of Guinness left. St Patrick’s Day today. Not much chance of making The Wicklow Arms, either. And, as you can see, I’ve got my mask and gloves on, so I’m well protected. But I reckon it’s only a matter of time before I ditch the latex gloves, you know. I only go out once or twice a day to get the paper or buy the odd thing, but they’re getting on my nerves. Definitely beginning to get on my fucking n----s. The plastic ones will do, the ones they always had inside supermarkets and now have at the entrances too, only now they’re mandatory before you go in. As for the mask, once the bloody thing slips a little, you can’t even see what you’re doing. Anyway, officers:

Is it?

HAPPY ST PATRICK’S DAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

Eh?

\*I realise not everyone’s going to understand that particular reference, but I just couldn’t resist.

Got a little bag to clean up after him, have we, sir?”

Chiara Gavasso

He cast glances all around him.

Italy

Naughty boy!

Local time: 21:19

You get back to heel this minute, do you hear me?

English to Italian

Off to bed tonight with no Kibbles ‘n’ Bits, is that what you want, me old son?”

Stay in, stay safe, keep calm and focused

He brought his face up to mine. Well, I say that, but really it was still around the regulatory metre and a bit, of course, but close enough for me.

Mar 17

“Er …”, I said. “Weren’t you … aren’t you … weren’t you, mm, Good Cop before?”

Thank you, fellow translators, for your comments.

The other one put a gloved hand on his arm.

I live in a small town in the north-east of Italy, and my routine hasn't changed much after the lockdown.

“I’m dreadfully sorry about this, sir,” said Bad Cop, with a wan smile.

I'm still working from home, my husband and I are looking forward to walking our dog or going to the supermarket for shopping.

Well, I mean Good Cop, I suppose. Or did I?

Yesterday I brought some food to my parents and my 96 y.o. grandma: talking to my mum from the street while she was on her balcony and being aware that I couldn't go to her and give her a hug or a kiss seemed unbelievable, but that's necessary now.

Maybe I was losing the plot. He turned to Good Cop. Or Bad Cop, rather:

I'm a long-distance runner and, despite solo running's not forbidden, I'm not running.

“Come on, Iker.”

For me "stay home and go out only for necessary reasons" means only one thing.

Good Cop’s shoulders came down, and his features relaxed.

Running is part of my life, I enjoy it a lot, it helps me relax and disconnect from anything.

“Well, yes, you see, it’s my turn today. We agreed to take it turn about, Eneko and me. Eneko can handle it – he just toughs up a bit, plays the hard man, and forgets about it later. I’m a normal kind of guy. But I go into overkill when it’s my turn for Bad Cop, me. I just want to kick ten kinds of shit out of anything that moves. They talk about the health service heroes having a bad time. They get applause from the balconies every night at 8 pm. What about us?

But it's not a primary need and sacrificing it now is nothing compared to the huge sacrifice that so many people directly involved in this emergency are making.

What about the coppers?

I'm working out at home, I'm practicing yoga every morning now - it's really amazing how it helps me kick off my day and provides me some good energy.

What about the rozzers?

I'm doing the cardio workout I did in the gym at home now, I'm trying to eat clean (despite my innate craving for sugary food and carbs!), and to keep calm.

What about the pigs?

I'm enjoying the cleaner air - pollution's decreased significantly -, the spring coming in, the birds chirping and no other external noise, I'm enjoying saying hello to and smiling at the very few unknown people I meet on the street. It's being difficult, everything I hear or read is related to the coronavirus, I'm afraid.

What about the filth?

On top of this, I don't have so much work, and I think it may be like this for long.

What about the bollocks we have to take, day in day out?

It takes a lot of effort and constant personal and mental discipline to go through this difficult time.

Even before all this coronavirus stuff. Who has to help all those little old ladies across the road?

But I know it'll make me grow and be stronger.

Who has to tell people what time it is all bloody day long?

We're (more or less) all in the same boat - connecting with other translators probably helps us feel better.

Who has to move on the winos lying in shop doorways?

Kay Denney

Who has to wade into a seedy joint full of dangerous crackheads and smackheads smashing the place up, and sort it all out?

masks

Who has to take those crumpled torn bodies out of the dumpsters?

Here in France, masks are for healthcare workers and infected people only, since there are not enough to go round.

Who has to knock on the door and tell them someone won’t be coming home from school today?

My understanding is that the masks are great when you are already sick, they prevent your spittle landing on someone and infecting them.

Who has to leap on to the landing gear of a plane just as it takes off, somehow struggle up into the hold, and proceed to take out twenty-odd members of a sinister terrorist organisation all armed to the teeth one by one, ripping the soles of his bare feet to bloody shreds on broken glass as he strangles, stabs and neck-snaps his way through the lot of them, but still with the wherewithal to think up constant deadpan, grim yet vaguely amusing derring-do one-liners to growl into the walkie-talkie to the fat black cop down below at air traffic control?

Not 100% effective but much better than nothing.

Who has to …?”

A friend has started making them - the first for the mother of a small baby who was frightened of passing it on to her baby.

“Iker”, said his mate gently, “you’ve got to get a grip on yourself, lad. You don’t want another mandatory six months with the psychologist every day, do you?

I'm thinking I shall make one for myself and whoever else might want one.

And you’ve been watching that Die Hard video again, right?

Only problem is time because I still have loads of work.

You have, haven’t you?

Not quite sure why deadlines are as usual when it's obvious that museum brochures are not urgent, but I'm happy to have work still.

I told you about that, didn’t I?”

Chris S

Iker chewed his lip.

Swedish to English

“OK,” he said slowly. “But it’s nearly end of shift now. My turn tomorrow, Eneko. My turn for Good Cop.”

Business as usual here

He shrugged.

I started the day with a swim in the town pool, and then I cycled to the optician's for an eye test and popped into the supermarket to buy food for supper.

“I can’t help it. It all started when Sergeant Garmendia\* went AWOL ages ago. Garmendia would know what to do.”

When my daughter came home from school we walked to the other supermarket to buy the things I forgot earlier, and then I cooked supper for the whole family who came over.

“That’s the spirit,” Eneko told him, and turned to me:

All while doing a full day of translation.

“So you aren’t walking the dog that isn’t there, are you, sir?”

And all without mask or marigolds.

“Oh no. I’m going to the supermarket, see if they have any cans of Guinness left. St Patrick’s Day today. Not much chance of making The Wicklow Arms, either. And, as you can see, I’ve got my mask and gloves on, so I’m well protected. But I reckon it’s only a matter of time before I ditch the latex gloves, you know. I only go out once or twice a day to get the paper or buy the odd thing, but they’re getting on my nerves. Definitely beginning to get on my fucking n----s. The plastic ones will do, the ones they always had inside supermarkets and now have at the entrances too, only now they’re mandatory before you go in. As for the mask, once the bloody thing slips a little, you can’t even see what you’re doing. Anyway, officers:

Tomorrow I'm going mountain biking after work while my daughter goes kayaking.

HAPPY ST PATRICK’S DAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

I guess we're taking a different approach in the UK at the moment.

\*I realise not everyone’s going to understand that particular reference, but I just couldn’t resist.

I do wonder whether cooping people up in their homes will do more harm than good.

Chiara Gavasso

Letting everyone out to walk the dog and exercise the children might be tricky in a city,

Italy

I suppose, but surely the house arrest doesn't apply in the countryside too?

Local time: 21:19

At the very least, someone has to work the fields and feed the cattle...

English to Italian

Michael Newton

Stay in, stay safe, keep calm and focused

Local time: 16:19

Mar 17

Member (2003)

Thank you, fellow translators, for your comments.

Japanese to English

I live in a small town in the north-east of Italy, and my routine hasn't changed much after the lockdown.

quarantine diary

I'm still working from home, my husband and I are looking forward to walking our dog or going to the supermarket for shopping.

Mar 18

Yesterday I brought some food to my parents and my 96 y.o. grandma: talking to my mum from the street while she was on her balcony and being aware that I couldn't go to her and give her a hug or a kiss seemed unbelievable, but that's necessary now.

Here in Boston, the city has shut down completely.

I'm a long-distance runner and, despite solo running's not forbidden, I'm not running.

Cinemas, department stores, restaurants, pubs, libraries, schools, universities.

For me "stay home and go out only for necessary reasons" means only one thing.

A few days ago, there were people in the streets.

Running is part of my life, I enjoy it a lot, it helps me relax and disconnect from anything.

Now it is a ghost town.

But it's not a primary need and sacrificing it now is nothing compared to the huge sacrifice that so many people directly involved in this emergency are making.

Our real estate agent has asked us to report "voluntarily" if anyone in the building has contracted the virus.

I'm working out at home, I'm practicing yoga every morning now - it's really amazing how it helps me kick off my day and provides me some good energy.

They are thinking of stopping all public transportation.

I'm doing the cardio workout I did in the gym at home now, I'm trying to eat clean (despite my innate craving for sugary food and carbs!), and to keep calm.

My only "journey" is three blocks away to a supermarket, a cautious twice a week, garbed in mask and gloves.

I'm enjoying the cleaner air - pollution's decreased significantly -, the spring coming in, the birds chirping and no other external noise, I'm enjoying saying hello to and smiling at the very few unknown people I meet on the street. It's being difficult, everything I hear or read is related to the coronavirus, I'm afraid.

Starbucks will only provide take-out. People are buying guns in droves (what do you expect, it's America).

On top of this, I don't have so much work, and I think it may be like this for long.

Meanwhile, it could be worse. I work on line and via Skype.

It takes a lot of effort and constant personal and mental discipline to go through this difficult time.

This week I am working with clients in China, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, the UK, Lithuania and Greece.

But I know it'll make me grow and be stronger.

No need to go outside and exercise, I have a home gym.

We're (more or less) all in the same boat - connecting with other translators probably helps us feel better.

Meanwhile, there is the Internet, Amazon Prime and Netflix (movies streamed online by subscription), about 5,000 books, 2,000 music CDs, several hundred DVDs, the radio, our wine collection.

Kay Denney

And my wife and I have each other.

masks

We wash our hands frequently (Japanese are lysophobes of the first water) and take our temperatures three times a day.

Here in France, masks are for healthcare workers and infected people only, since there are not enough to go round.

We are hunkered down for the long run.

My understanding is that the masks are great when you are already sick, they prevent your spittle landing on someone and infecting them.

Outside there is a deathly silence.

Not 100% effective but much better than nothing.

It is estimated that eventually unemployment in the US will reach 20 %, a figure not seen since the Great Depression.

A friend has started making them - the first for the mother of a small baby who was frightened of passing it on to her baby.

Millions of people without work, money and food.

I'm thinking I shall make one for myself and whoever else might want one.

Meanwhile tens of thousands of "migrants" from Central America on the Southern border are clamoring to be let in to partake of our free food, housing and medical care.

Only problem is time because I still have loads of work.

They are in for a shock (as I'm sure are the some 50,000 refugees on Greece's doorstep).

Not quite sure why deadlines are as usual when it's obvious that museum brochures are not urgent, but I'm happy to have work still.

In the next several weeks, the US Government will send USD 1,000 to every US citizen to tide them over.

Chris S

This cannot end well.

Swedish to English

Gun stores ...

Business as usual here

... still open for business, then.

I started the day with a swim in the town pool, and then I cycled to the optician's for an eye test and popped into the supermarket to buy food for supper.

That's encouraging.

When my daughter came home from school we walked to the other supermarket to buy the things I forgot earlier, and then I cooked supper for the whole family who came over.

Enough to make Charlton Heston's cold dead fingers twitch in their cold dead clutch.

All while doing a full day of translation.

Susanna Martoni

And all without mask or marigolds.

Member (2009)

Tomorrow I'm going mountain biking after work while my daughter goes kayaking.

Spanish to Italian

I guess we're taking a different approach in the UK at the moment.

Hard hard story in Italy

I do wonder whether cooping people up in their homes will do more harm than good.

Good morning to everybody.

Letting everyone out to walk the dog and exercise the children might be tricky in a city,

As you certainly know in Italy the situation is serious and dangerous.

I suppose, but surely the house arrest doesn't apply in the countryside too?

Today the number of infected persons is more tha 31,000 and data seem not be improving, nor numbers decreasing.

At the very least, someone has to work the fields and feed the cattle...

Today's newpapers open with an article about Pope Francis (be together, spiritually and think of your family as a precious resourse), with some stories about the many young people who are in the hospital at the moment (also babies) and fortunately several positive experiences.

Michael Newton

I especially like the title and content of a series of articles titled "La prima cosa bella"

Local time: 16:19

(The first good thing) where we can appreciate beauty, in general.

Member (2003)

People helping, things improving, sense of life).

Japanese to English

We are and remain at home.

quarantine diary

Practically, only supermarkets and pharmacies are open.

Mar 18

Most of the companies use forms of support such as the temporary redundancy fund because are stopping activities, schools are of course closed (online and remote learning systems).

Here in Boston, the city has shut down completely.

I am working at a patent right now, but the professional situation makes me think in pessimistic terms.

Cinemas, department stores, restaurants, pubs, libraries, schools, universities.

The government is supporting workers and people by also introducing new doctors and healthcare assistants, money, resources, aids.

A few days ago, there were people in the streets.

For our work, and freelance professional activities in general, 600,00 Euros should be available for each of us, this and next month.

Now it is a ghost town.

We have to be strong strong strong and hold on tightly.

Our real estate agent has asked us to report "voluntarily" if anyone in the building has contracted the virus.

Un saluto a tutti!

They are thinking of stopping all public transportation.

Dan Lucas

My only "journey" is three blocks away to a supermarket, a cautious twice a week, garbed in mask and gloves.

Local time: 20:19

Starbucks will only provide take-out. People are buying guns in droves (what do you expect, it's America).

In the rural west of the UK, a slow turning inwards

Meanwhile, it could be worse. I work on line and via Skype.

Here in rural west Wales, the economy is overwhelmingly dependent on two industries: agriculture and tourism.

This week I am working with clients in China, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, the UK, Lithuania and Greece.

The former seems to be holding up, but the latter is going to be hit harder than ever before.

No need to go outside and exercise, I have a home gym.

There have been announcements in the media of coronavirus in Pembrokeshire, but I have heard no word-of-mouth reports as yet.

Meanwhile, there is the Internet, Amazon Prime and Netflix (movies streamed online by subscription), about 5,000 books, 2,000 music CDs, several hundred DVDs, the radio, our wine collection.

For year-round residents, some things are shutting down indefinitely; friends tell me that yoga classes, singing, and the weekly circle dance group have all come to a halt. I suspect the farmer's market in St Dogmaels, voted best food market in Britain in the 2016 BBC Food and Farming Awards, will have to close soon.

And my wife and I have each other.

During the tourism season (roughly late March to late September, but it doesn't really get going until May)

We wash our hands frequently (Japanese are lysophobes of the first water) and take our temperatures three times a day.

I work for one half-day every week at the information centre of our small town, which is run entirely by volunteers and completely self-funded.

We are hunkered down for the long run.

Unlike myself, most of the other volunteers are retired or semi-retired.

Outside there is a deathly silence.

Given that they are thus in the "high risk" category, and that a tourist information centre attracts non-locals by definition, yesterday it was decided to suspend the spring opening indefinitely.

It is estimated that eventually unemployment in the US will reach 20 %, a figure not seen since the Great Depression.

On a day-to-day basis, life has not changed much for me.

Millions of people without work, money and food.

Work-wise, the month of January was very slow in terms of orders received (probably the worst in the past five years), but February was an improvement, and March is looking better again. Japanese clients seem to be gradually recovering, and I am still getting requests from some European clients.

Meanwhile tens of thousands of "migrants" from Central America on the Southern border are clamoring to be let in to partake of our free food, housing and medical care.

My fingers are firmly crossed.

They are in for a shock (as I'm sure are the some 50,000 refugees on Greece's doorstep).

Our family is gradually implementing social distancing, but the wild cards are the two schools our children attend. I can see why they haven't closed, but I suspect it is only a matter of time.

In the next several weeks, the US Government will send USD 1,000 to every US citizen to tide them over.

Our house are isolated at the end of a long track, surrounded by woods and fields, so once the children are corralled we would normally have a good chance of avoiding infection.

This cannot end well.

Shopping would then be the most likely vector for transmission, and shopping for ourselves and others cannot be avoided, as my elderly mother has begun to self-isolate and she needs our support.

Gun stores ...

As I write, the roundabouts and roadsides around Cardigan and Newport are full of daffodils, intermingled with snowdrops in the more shaded areas.

... still open for business, then.

Elsewhere, all that can be seen at this stage are the buds of the pussy willow, curtains of catkins, and some early celandines.

That's encouraging.

When April and May come the woods and hedgerows will burst into a mass of flower, as will the 185-mile length of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park coastal path.

Enough to make Charlton Heston's cold dead fingers twitch in their cold dead clutch.

The field behind my home will briefly become an undulating shimmer of bluebells, with a few photogenic hill ponies scattered for effect, as it does every spring.

Susanna Martoni

It's sad to think that very few visitors are likely to enjoy this seasonal bounty in 2020.

Member (2009)

Regards,

Spanish to Italian

Dan

Hard hard story in Italy

Process

Good morning to everybody.

I suppose a couple of weeks ago the Italians trapped at home were looking across at Spain in astonishment as we all wondered idly here over a wine or two at the local watering hole about what was going to happen, because you don't really believe the lockdown until it comes.

As you certainly know in Italy the situation is serious and dangerous.

Now we're in the same boat as Italy, a boat that's not sailing anywhere,

Today the number of infected persons is more tha 31,000 and data seem not be improving, nor numbers decreasing.

I read about Chris and the swimming pool and Dan and the yoga classes, when they're kind of still on the brink of all this, as it were, and I think,

Today's newpapers open with an article about Pope Francis (be together, spiritually and think of your family as a precious resourse), with some stories about the many young people who are in the hospital at the moment (also babies) and fortunately several positive experiences.

God, that was us until not so long ago.

I especially like the title and content of a series of articles titled "La prima cosa bella"

Sooner or later Boris is going to have to do the same, and it'll be a shock when it comes.

(The first good thing) where we can appreciate beauty, in general.

I know I've flogged the dog thing unnecessarily, but here's another anecdote: a man in Bilbao was questioned by police after he'd been reported for "walking his dog" on eight separate occasions one morning (somebody's on lookout duty from the balcony all right).

People helping, things improving, sense of life).

Country life?

We are and remain at home.

Fair point. We know the proverbial is about to hit the fan, but for now it's largely a case of keep calm and carry on.

Practically, only supermarkets and pharmacies are open.

What's happening outside the cities in Spain and Italy?

Most of the companies use forms of support such as the temporary redundancy fund because are stopping activities, schools are of course closed (online and remote learning systems).

Is rural life not continuing a little more normally?

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Are there really roadblocks and snitches on every corner?

The government is supporting workers and people by also introducing new doctors and healthcare assistants, money, resources, aids.

Not for the first time,

For our work, and freelance professional activities in general, 600,00 Euros should be available for each of us, this and next month.

I'm so glad we live in the sticks and not in a flat five floors up in the heart of a city.

We have to be strong strong strong and hold on tightly.

Even so, I'm dreading having two teenagers hanging around for weeks, lovely though they can be.

Un saluto a tutti!

Can't help thinking there'll be more suicides and murders than deaths prevented...

Dan Lucas

Real reports?

Local time: 20:19

So far I've only heard about the Covid-19 process from what I've heard on the news or read, but little or nothing from someone who's been through it and come out the other side.

In the rural west of the UK, a slow turning inwards

The only personal report I've seen says it starts with a sore throat and a fever, which I knew anyway, but he's in hospital now, and doesn't say any more about it, apart from that he feels fine now at the hospital.

Here in rural west Wales, the economy is overwhelmingly dependent on two industries: agriculture and tourism.

He's 22.

The former seems to be holding up, but the latter is going to be hit harder than ever before.

Oksana Weiss

There have been announcements in the media of coronavirus in Pembrokeshire, but I have heard no word-of-mouth reports as yet.

Member (2011)

For year-round residents, some things are shutting down indefinitely; friends tell me that yoga classes, singing, and the weekly circle dance group have all come to a halt. I suspect the farmer's market in St Dogmaels, voted best food market in Britain in the 2016 BBC Food and Farming Awards, will have to close soon.

English to Ukrainian

During the tourism season (roughly late March to late September, but it doesn't really get going until May)

Hallo to rural UK from rural Germany

I work for one half-day every week at the information centre of our small town, which is run entirely by volunteers and completely self-funded.

When it is over, Dan, I promise to come and do the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park coastal path (at least now I know about it!).

Unlike myself, most of the other volunteers are retired or semi-retired.

For now, while the schools are closed but it is not yet prohibitted to go outside, I do Nordic Walking with my son in the woods on the hills.

Given that they are thus in the "high risk" category, and that a tourist information centre attracts non-locals by definition, yesterday it was decided to suspend the spring opening indefinitely.

We meet no one on the way, apart from occasional hare or deer, and you are right: the spring is coming and the nature is awakening, full of scents, colours and sounds.

On a day-to-day basis, life has not changed much for me.

This is the best cure from negative thoughts, the way to clear the mind from disturbing thoughts and to calm oneself down.

Work-wise, the month of January was very slow in terms of orders received (probably the worst in the past five years), but February was an improvement, and March is looking better again. Japanese clients seem to be gradually recovering, and I am still getting requests from some European clients.

Everything is going to be all right, eventually.

My fingers are firmly crossed.

@Chris Mar 18

Our family is gradually implementing social distancing, but the wild cards are the two schools our children attend. I can see why they haven't closed, but I suspect it is only a matter of time.

I live in rural Lombardy. In the first week or so of restricted movement (before full lockdown) there was a lot of disregard for pleas to stay at home.

Our house are isolated at the end of a long track, surrounded by woods and fields, so once the children are corralled we would normally have a good chance of avoiding infection.

The result has been (and nobody doubts it's a result) an explosion in infections.

Shopping would then be the most likely vector for transmission, and shopping for ourselves and others cannot be avoided, as my elderly mother has begun to self-isolate and she needs our support.

We have a (relatively) lower rate of infection in my province, but things are still bad and we're having to set up emergency hospital facilities to deal with the flood of critical cases being brought in from elsewhere in region.

As I write, the roundabouts and roadsides around Cardigan and Newport are full of daffodils, intermingled with snowdrops in the more shaded areas.

Testing is no longer available and those ill are just being told to stay at home unless critical.

Elsewhere, all that can be seen at this stage are the buds of the pussy willow, curtains of catkins, and some early celandines.

These include members of my wife's family and my friends.

When April and May come the woods and hedgerows will burst into a mass of flower, as will the 185-mile length of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park coastal path.

What is going on in our hospitals is beyond anything you can imagine.

The field behind my home will briefly become an undulating shimmer of bluebells, with a few photogenic hill ponies scattered for effect, as it does every spring.

Nothing like this has ever been seen or experienced in the last 70 years.

It's sad to think that very few visitors are likely to enjoy this seasonal bounty in 2020.

In Bergamo, 50 km down the road, people are dying too fast to be buried.

Regards,

A field hospital has been set up next to the existing state-of-the-art facility, but it's still not enough.

Dan

PPE has run out for doctors and to date 2600 healthcare staff have been infected.

Process

Lombardy, like Wuhan, was unfortunate enough to discover a massive cluster at a point where containment was the only option.

I suppose a couple of weeks ago the Italians trapped at home were looking across at Spain in astonishment as we all wondered idly here over a wine or two at the local watering hole about what was going to happen, because you don't really believe the lockdown until it comes.

The situation in the rest of Europe is not comparable to Lombardy (with the possible exception of Madrid), but that does not mean things will not get bad if restrictions on movement are not enforced.

Now we're in the same boat as Italy, a boat that's not sailing anywhere,

How you act in the window you now have will determine how many old people (and not only) will die in the coming weeks and how many doctors and nurses will fall ill.

I read about Chris and the swimming pool and Dan and the yoga classes, when they're kind of still on the brink of all this, as it were, and I think,

Is it really necessary to stay cooped up at home?

God, that was us until not so long ago.

Yes.

Sooner or later Boris is going to have to do the same, and it'll be a shock when it comes.

Isn't it healthier, if you live in the countryside, to go out for a little air and exercise?

I know I've flogged the dog thing unnecessarily, but here's another anecdote: a man in Bilbao was questioned by police after he'd been reported for "walking his dog" on eight separate occasions one morning (somebody's on lookout duty from the balcony all right).

No.

Country life?

This is not a time for experimenting with different approaches, philosophies or lifestyle choices.

Fair point. We know the proverbial is about to hit the fan, but for now it's largely a case of keep calm and carry on.

It's a time for putting individual behaviour aside and for shared courage and responsibility.

What's happening outside the cities in Spain and Italy?

Looking at the UK from here, most of us imagine something truly terrible is on its way.

Is rural life not continuing a little more normally?

I hope for your sake we're all wrong, and if we are, please have a chuckle at our continental alarmism!

Are there really roadblocks and snitches on every corner?

But just remember there is no plan B and these days and the actions you take in them cannot be wound back.

Not for the first time,

So you're biking and your daughter's kayaking.

I'm so glad we live in the sticks and not in a flat five floors up in the heart of a city.

I'm just hoping I don't fall ill because there's no more place in the ICUs and I don't want my daughter to have to watch me struggle for breath like a landed fish.

Even so, I'm dreading having two teenagers hanging around for weeks, lovely though they can be.

Anthony ...

Can't help thinking there'll be more suicides and murders than deaths prevented...

... better copy Boris in on that one.

Real reports?

Well said.

So far I've only heard about the Covid-19 process from what I've heard on the news or read, but little or nothing from someone who's been through it and come out the other side.

And Leo, while you're at it.

The only personal report I've seen says it starts with a sore throat and a fever, which I knew anyway, but he's in hospital now, and doesn't say any more about it, apart from that he feels fine now at the hospital.

Zibow Retailleau

He's 22.

Mauritius

Oksana Weiss

Local time: 00:19

Member (2011)

on an African island

English to Ukrainian

According to the Mauritian government, there aren't any cases in the country.

Hallo to rural UK from rural Germany

Life seems normal.

When it is over, Dan, I promise to come and do the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park coastal path (at least now I know about it!).

No one is wearing a mask; handshakes and 'faire la bise' are still going on.

For now, while the schools are closed but it is not yet prohibitted to go outside, I do Nordic Walking with my son in the woods on the hills.

However, the toilet roll shelves in the supermarket which I frequent have been bare for two days, and the school in which my husband works might close up.

We meet no one on the way, apart from occasional hare or deer, and you are right: the spring is coming and the nature is awakening, full of scents, colours and sounds.

If there's an outbreak here, I will be more worried about the underprivileged.

This is the best cure from negative thoughts, the way to clear the mind from disturbing thoughts and to calm oneself down.

But don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that it's OK for people who can afford medical bills to get sick.

Everything is going to be all right, eventually.

I just wonder if people who have nothing get the virus, who will take care of them.

@Chris Mar 18

I hope we can all ride this out.

I live in rural Lombardy. In the first week or so of restricted movement (before full lockdown) there was a lot of disregard for pleas to stay at home.

Best wishes!

The result has been (and nobody doubts it's a result) an explosion in infections.

Meanwhile in Barcelona

We have a (relatively) lower rate of infection in my province, but things are still bad and we're having to set up emergency hospital facilities to deal with the flood of critical cases being brought in from elsewhere in region.

Total lockdown here too

Testing is no longer available and those ill are just being told to stay at home unless critical.

We could in fact sneak out as we live on the edge of the city, right next to a massive natural park, which is four times the city's surface area.

These include members of my wife's family and my friends.

But we don't.

What is going on in our hospitals is beyond anything you can imagine.

Perhaps civic consciousness, or perhaps we're just afraid of what the neighbours might think.

Nothing like this has ever been seen or experienced in the last 70 years.

We're aware that we have a relatively big flat, with a balcony, and a terrace on the roof, which makes it much easier than it is for whole families cooped up in one of millions of smallish flats.

In Bergamo, 50 km down the road, people are dying too fast to be buried.

But above all we're pretty used to working from home anyway, and to not going out that much.

A field hospital has been set up next to the existing state-of-the-art facility, but it's still not enough.

From what I can see from my window, there's very little traffic out there.

PPE has run out for doctors and to date 2600 healthcare staff have been infected.

And the odd police drone hovering in the sky...

Lombardy, like Wuhan, was unfortunate enough to discover a massive cluster at a point where containment was the only option.

Local time: 21:28

The situation in the rest of Europe is not comparable to Lombardy (with the possible exception of Madrid), but that does not mean things will not get bad if restrictions on movement are not enforced.

"from someone who's been through it and come out the other side"

How you act in the window you now have will determine how many old people (and not only) will die in the coming weeks and how many doctors and nurses will fall ill.

A 73-year-old man, who recovered, tells his story here: https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/le-journal-de-13h. Click on "1h" at the bottom of the picture of the empty street and go to 31:30 (bottom right of the screen). It says it stops there but it actually keeps going. The testimony starts at 32:30.

Is it really necessary to stay cooped up at home?

Note that it is in French.

Yes.

Edit: Sorry, the link isn't working.Try this one: https://www.franceinter.fr/info and start again from Click on "1h" and go to 32:52.

Isn't it healthier, if you live in the countryside, to go out for a little air and exercise?

[Edited at 2020-03-18 16:08 GMT]

No.

Guns Mar 18

This is not a time for experimenting with different approaches, philosophies or lifestyle choices.

Gun stores still open for business, then. That's encouraging. Enough to make Charlton Heston's cold dead fingers twitch in their cold dead clutch.

It's a time for putting individual behaviour aside and for shared courage and responsibility.

A virus shot has a very different meaning in the US. 😁

Looking at the UK from here, most of us imagine something truly terrible is on its way.

Chris S

I hope for your sake we're all wrong, and if we are, please have a chuckle at our continental alarmism!

Choices Mar 18

But just remember there is no plan B and these days and the actions you take in them cannot be wound back.

Anthony Keily wrote:

So you're biking and your daughter's kayaking.

This is not a time for experimenting with different approaches, philosophies or lifestyle choices. It's a time for putting individual behaviour aside and for shared courage and responsibility.

I'm just hoping I don't fall ill because there's no more place in the ICUs and I don't want my daughter to have to watch me struggle for breath like a landed fish.

While I understand these are stressful times, there's no need for a sermon...

Anthony ...

I would argue that the courageous and responsible thing is to carry on as normal, taking sensible precautions, and not contribute to the hysteria.

... better copy Boris in on that one.

Outdoor exercise cannot possibly increase the spread of the disease.

Well said.

I'm not in a position to come up with a cure, so keeping myself fit and healthy so I can continue to support my family and the economy, while avoiding direct contact with the old and infirm, is my contribution. If everyone did that...

And Leo, while you're at it.

4 more...

Zibow Retailleau

Healthier Mar 18

Mauritius

Getting fresh air and exercise is obviously healthier, which, I presume, is why for example France allows it as long as you carry a form and keep a distance from other people. The virus is not going to jump 3 metres from one person to another in open air.

Local time: 00:19

Italy and Spain have chosen a more authoritarian approach, but that doesn't mean it's healthier or less risky. It just means these governments are more authoritarian.

on an African island

Erika Ballardin

According to the Mauritian government, there aren't any cases in the country.

my quarantine Mar 18

Life seems normal.

I live in a medium size town in the north-east of Italy, not too close to the second focus of infection which saw the outbreak of the virus.

No one is wearing a mask; handshakes and 'faire la bise' are still going on.

My life keeps going as always, in the sense that, working from home, I didn't go out to reach an office before as well as I'm not doing that now.

However, the toilet roll shelves in the supermarket which I frequent have been bare for two days, and the school in which my husband works might close up.

My town has seen only three cases of infection, but our hospital has been enforced to become one of the main regional centres where to take care of the increasing number of people infected, at the forefront of this battle.

If there's an outbreak here, I will be more worried about the underprivileged.

I'm not particularly worried for the virus, but I abide by the rules of not going out apart for running errands. What worries me are the economic consequences of this protracted lockdown, not only in my country but throughout Europe. I have already noticed a slowing down of jobs coming in, but the worst has yet to come

But don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that it's OK for people who can afford medical bills to get sick.

I miss so much going out...working always from home, I went out for a walk every evening because my mind needs a bit of fresh air...

I just wonder if people who have nothing get the virus, who will take care of them.

When our Prime Minister announced these draconian measures, at first we were confused, we hadn't entirely realised yet what that could have meant for our lives. Then we felt shocked and now we live in resignation, partly worried for our beloved ones and because we can't perceive an end to all of this, partly bored when not "trapped".

I hope we can all ride this out.

Now, more than before, I can recall my parents telling me their stories about WWII, when as little children they had to seek refuge from bombing...I know this comparison is not appropriate at all, yet I think it's the only one I can do for my part as I have never had to confront with such a situation in my entire life.

Best wishes!

However, not all the evil comes for harming. I have seen pictures of canals in Venice. Without tourists, and big ships and "vaporetti" wandering up and down, they're blue if not transparent. You can see even the bottom of the canals. I would have never said I could see this.

Meanwhile in Barcelona

Local time: 20:28

Total lockdown here too

State of emergency Mar 18

We could in fact sneak out as we live on the edge of the city, right next to a massive natural park, which is four times the city's surface area.

Today, Portuguese government wiil decide to declare state of emergency throughout the country.

But we don't.

RobinB

Perhaps civic consciousness, or perhaps we're just afraid of what the neighbours might think.

Local time: 15:28

We're aware that we have a relatively big flat, with a balcony, and a terrace on the roof, which makes it much easier than it is for whole families cooped up in one of millions of smallish flats.

Meanwhile... Mar 18

But above all we're pretty used to working from home anyway, and to not going out that much.

...in other news, Pennsylvania decided to close all of its liquor stores, i.e., both the state-owned stores and their licensees. Apparently they were cleaned out after the closure was announced. Now that's REALLY going to curb the spread of the virus, because lots of people will now travel to neighboring states to stock up on liquor/spirits. People have been writing in social media about how it's bad enough to be cooped up at home with the kids for weeks on end without being able to have a stiff drink.

From what I can see from my window, there's very little traffic out there.

Here in Texas, many liquor stores (you can also buy beer and wine in the supermarkets) are now offering curbside pickup so nobody has to even go into the stores. Way to go. If Governor Abbott tried to close the liquor stores entirely, there would probably be blood on the streets. After all, this is Texas, where there more guns than people (except here in Austin, where there are more dogs than people - a consequence of the city's "no kill" policy), and if there's one thing that unites most Texans, it's the ability to drink vast quantities of alcohol. And to distill and brew it, too: blink here in the Hill Country and you'll miss the news that another microbrewery or distiller (vodka, gin, even whiskey) has opened up just down the road. Tito's Handmade Vodka, distilled here in Austin, is now the #1 vodka in the US, apparently (it also helps that it's gluten-free).

And the odd police drone hovering in the sky...

All bars are now closed in Austin, even the famous Broken Spoke, the last honkey tonk establishment. Restaurants are closed, too, but only for dine-in. In fact, Austin residents are being positively encouraged to order pick-up or delivery from local restaurants and food trucks to help make sure they don't go bust and have to lay off staff. So, many wait staff (servers) have now been converted into delivery drivers. Rather to my surprise, a real sense of community feeling and solidarity with threatened businesses and workers is now emerging. This is significant, because around 50% of the food consumed in Texas comes from the restaurants in the state, and tourism and hospitality account for a large proportion of local GDP in Austin.

Local time: 21:28

Otherwise, it's the usual "no gatherings of more than 10 people", so a lot of other shops and services have closed (hairdressers, nail salons, etc.). Those workers who were employed can get benefits, but a lot of them are self-employed and now facing financial disaster. The City is looking at ways to help, and we've also decided to help people we know.

"from someone who's been through it and come out the other side"

The "lethal lethargy" that informed and underpinned federal government policy for so long seems to have given way to blind panic and "actionisme" at the top. Funny how the US and the UK are still so similar after almost 250 years: dysfunctional, single-issue heads of government who seem to be constitutionally incapable of manning up in a real emergency.

A 73-year-old man, who recovered, tells his story here: https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/le-journal-de-13h. Click on "1h" at the bottom of the picture of the empty street and go to 31:30 (bottom right of the screen). It says it stops there but it actually keeps going. The testimony starts at 32:30.

Wednesday 18 March Mar 18

Note that it is in French.

You can’t say the Spanish government isn’t throwing everything it’s got at this over here. Last week there were “too-little-too-late” malcontents various murmuring in the background, but now they’re only murmuring about the “too late” part of it. Sánchez’s grimly wheeled in the army, the navy and the air force and all their healthcare facilities, the private clinics and hospitals ditto, giving any companies or organisations anywhere 48 hours to report any and all facilities, equipment and stocks they might have to the Ministry of Health. And all controlled on the central government’s say-so, which some see as normal, while some nationalists in the Spanish State’s autonomous regions regard it as a virtual coup. Take your pick.

Edit: Sorry, the link isn't working.Try this one: https://www.franceinter.fr/info and start again from Click on "1h" and go to 32:52.

[Edited at 2020-03-18 19:04 GMT]

[Edited at 2020-03-18 16:08 GMT]

Dan Lucas

Guns Mar 18

A little hasty, perhaps Mar 18

Gun stores still open for business, then. That's encouraging. Enough to make Charlton Heston's cold dead fingers twitch in their cold dead clutch.

dysfunctional, single-issue heads of government who seem to be constitutionally incapable of manning up in a real emergency.

A virus shot has a very different meaning in the US. 😁

Would it not be sensible to wait a few months - or even longer - before we jump to politically-tinted conclusions?

Chris S

It's very early days for this crisis. I don't see the UK doing noticeably worse or better than other European countries at this point, nor do I particularly disagree with the government's approach. Every state is trying to find something that works for their own specific set of circumstances, which are changing day by day as part of a protean global situation unprecedented in its scope.

Choices Mar 18

This is not, after all, a competition.

Anthony Keily wrote:

Angie Garbarino

This is not a time for experimenting with different approaches, philosophies or lifestyle choices. It's a time for putting individual behaviour aside and for shared courage and responsibility.

French to Italian

While I understand these are stressful times, there's no need for a sermon...

No Mar 18

I would argue that the courageous and responsible thing is to carry on as normal, taking sensible precautions, and not contribute to the hysteria.

Just more infected. I see you don't know these countries well, I do, as I am Italian citizen living in Spain (resident) now blocked in Italy. I recommend to be more informed before stating.

Outdoor exercise cannot possibly increase the spread of the disease.

Regards

I'm not in a position to come up with a cure, so keeping myself fit and healthy so I can continue to support my family and the economy, while avoiding direct contact with the old and infirm, is my contribution. If everyone did that...

London's not calling Mar 18

4 more...

Here's the latest update from the Financial Times about plans to put London on lockdown by this coming weekend:

Healthier Mar 18

Officials are "being briefed on plans to close down London — the worst affected part of Britain — as early as Friday, with police being put on standby to prevent the possible looting of deserted town centres.

Getting fresh air and exercise is obviously healthier, which, I presume, is why for example France allows it as long as you carry a form and keep a distance from other people. The virus is not going to jump 3 metres from one person to another in open air.

According to one person briefed on the proposal, there would be a full lockdown of the capital with only one person allowed to leave home at a time, with no entry to local shopping areas.

Italy and Spain have chosen a more authoritarian approach, but that doesn't mean it's healthier or less risky. It just means these governments are more authoritarian.

Supermarkets would be guarded by police, while pharmacies would be among the few other shops to remain open.

Erika Ballardin

Two officials briefed on the proposals said residents and business would be given just 12 hours’ notice of the new restrictions. They could initially be in place for about a fortnight."

my quarantine Mar 18

According to the FT article (at https://www.ft.com/content/4648d3d4-693c-11ea-a3c9-1fe6fedcca75 if you can get behind the paywall), this could be followed by a lockdown for the whole country.

I live in a medium size town in the north-east of Italy, not too close to the second focus of infection which saw the outbreak of the virus.

Informed Mar 18

My life keeps going as always, in the sense that, working from home, I didn't go out to reach an office before as well as I'm not doing that now.

Angie Garbarino wrote:

My town has seen only three cases of infection, but our hospital has been enforced to become one of the main regional centres where to take care of the increasing number of people infected, at the forefront of this battle.

If the virus doesn't infect at a distance of two metres in open air, then it helps nobody to make it illegal to be outside, provided that this distance is observed, regardless of how infected the country is. But it may destabilise some people more quickly if they are confined inside than if they were allowed some fresh air and exercise. This could exacerbate depression, violence and suicide and generally make people less able to cope with the stress.

I'm not particularly worried for the virus, but I abide by the rules of not going out apart for running errands. What worries me are the economic consequences of this protracted lockdown, not only in my country but throughout Europe. I have already noticed a slowing down of jobs coming in, but the worst has yet to come

Of course, I know how Italians and Spaniards are (please don't make presumptions about what I know or not based on conjecture, and please don't turn this debate into ad hominem attacks, which would just make everything more unpleasant for everybody), so perhaps the government consider that the two-metre rule will not be respected – i.e. they consider more authoritarian rules necessary than in the North.

I miss so much going out...working always from home, I went out for a walk every evening because my mind needs a bit of fresh air...

I understand your frustration, but it's unfair to take it out on others. None of us wanted this.

When our Prime Minister announced these draconian measures, at first we were confused, we hadn't entirely realised yet what that could have meant for our lives. Then we felt shocked and now we live in resignation, partly worried for our beloved ones and because we can't perceive an end to all of this, partly bored when not "trapped".

[Edited at 2020-03-19 00:29 GMT]

Now, more than before, I can recall my parents telling me their stories about WWII, when as little children they had to seek refuge from bombing...I know this comparison is not appropriate at all, yet I think it's the only one I can do for my part as I have never had to confront with such a situation in my entire life.

Two meter/six foot "rule" Mar 18

However, not all the evil comes for harming. I have seen pictures of canals in Venice. Without tourists, and big ships and "vaporetti" wandering up and down, they're blue if not transparent. You can see even the bottom of the canals. I would have never said I could see this.

This is just an advisory distance, not exact science. The virus can evidently hang around in the air (especially still air) for several hours, so you can keep 2m/6ft away from everybody else and still be infected. It can mitigate the risk, it doesn't remove it.

Local time: 20:28

Inside/outside Mar 18

State of emergency Mar 18

This is actually a very interesting question. It seems unlikely that the virus could hang around in the air outside for several hours. How would it not be blown away?

Today, Portuguese government wiil decide to declare state of emergency throughout the country.

https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/stephaniemlee/coronavirus-plastic-stainless-steel-surfaces describes some recent experiments:

RobinB

'The scientists ran a battery of tests with a strain of SARS-CoV-2. They sprayed it into a rotating drum and measured how long it stayed in the air: three hours.'

Local time: 15:28

Three hours in a confined environment. But we're talking open air.

Meanwhile... Mar 18

'He also noted that in the open air, viruses tend to dry out from humidity or be killed off by ultraviolet light.'

...in other news, Pennsylvania decided to close all of its liquor stores, i.e., both the state-owned stores and their licensees. Apparently they were cleaned out after the closure was announced. Now that's REALLY going to curb the spread of the virus, because lots of people will now travel to neighboring states to stock up on liquor/spirits. People have been writing in social media about how it's bad enough to be cooped up at home with the kids for weeks on end without being able to have a stiff drink.

Has anyone found more information about this?

Here in Texas, many liquor stores (you can also buy beer and wine in the supermarkets) are now offering curbside pickup so nobody has to even go into the stores. Way to go. If Governor Abbott tried to close the liquor stores entirely, there would probably be blood on the streets. After all, this is Texas, where there more guns than people (except here in Austin, where there are more dogs than people - a consequence of the city's "no kill" policy), and if there's one thing that unites most Texans, it's the ability to drink vast quantities of alcohol. And to distill and brew it, too: blink here in the Hill Country and you'll miss the news that another microbrewery or distiller (vodka, gin, even whiskey) has opened up just down the road. Tito's Handmade Vodka, distilled here in Austin, is now the #1 vodka in the US, apparently (it also helps that it's gluten-free).

Some countries ban outside exercise, France allows it if you carry a form (as always, paperwork is very important in France), others have no restrictions. Obviously the risk is higher in a crowd in a city than in a sleepy province town. But what do we know for sure?

All bars are now closed in Austin, even the famous Broken Spoke, the last honkey tonk establishment. Restaurants are closed, too, but only for dine-in. In fact, Austin residents are being positively encouraged to order pick-up or delivery from local restaurants and food trucks to help make sure they don't go bust and have to lay off staff. So, many wait staff (servers) have now been converted into delivery drivers. Rather to my surprise, a real sense of community feeling and solidarity with threatened businesses and workers is now emerging. This is significant, because around 50% of the food consumed in Texas comes from the restaurants in the state, and tourism and hospitality account for a large proportion of local GDP in Austin.

Thursday 19 March – a right royal virus Mar 19

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Went down for the paper. Stairs, but no mask and just the plastic gloves. ‘Basque Country just shy of 1,000 infected, 40 dead and “the worst is yet to come”’, croaks the headline. Golly. I always need my coffee before I do anything in the mornings, but today it mightn’t hurt to throw a shot or two of Jameson’s into the mug of coffee. Or even throw a shot or two of coffee into the mug of Jameson’s. … but no, after this and the coffee it’s down to a round of exercises.

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Wednesday 18 March Mar 18

Last night’s nine o’clock news kicked off from the Royal Palace, where King Felipe VI was making his solemn speech to the nation. It was what you would expect, along the lines of: “… we share your pain … dark days ahead … all pull as one … our brave nation … honi soit qui mal y pense … my utmost confidence … stalwart doctors and nurses … tirelessly working … bloody but unbowed … silver lining … we shall overcome … light at the end of the tunnel … you’ll never walk alone …” etc. Don’t get me wrong: it would have been the same from Elizabeth, Gustav, Harald, Willem-Alexander or any of the rest.

You can’t say the Spanish government isn’t throwing everything it’s got at this over here. Last week there were “too-little-too-late” malcontents various murmuring in the background, but now they’re only murmuring about the “too late” part of it. Sánchez’s grimly wheeled in the army, the navy and the air force and all their healthcare facilities, the private clinics and hospitals ditto, giving any companies or organisations anywhere 48 hours to report any and all facilities, equipment and stocks they might have to the Ministry of Health. And all controlled on the central government’s say-so, which some see as normal, while some nationalists in the Spanish State’s autonomous regions regard it as a virtual coup. Take your pick.

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[Edited at 2020-03-18 19:04 GMT]

No space or time to go into it all here, but suffice it to say that the monarchy has had its trials and tribulations in the last few years. The saucepan fracas concerns his father, the ex-king, who abdicated in his favour, and the news, which broke recently, of the sum of 65 million euros pa reportedly donated to an aristocratic Nordic lady of his acquaintance, by way of a token of his affection. The first thing you think is, if you can give away 65M to someone, you obviously have a lot more than that stashed away somewhere. An awful lot, a big big lot, a huge ginormous lot. But where?

Dan Lucas

Not in one of those patriotic transparent Spanish bank accounts, surely. No, silly, sshh – say the chattering classes, and murmur the words “bank”, “Swiss” and “accounts”, though not in that order. And the people on the balconies think that, especially with everyone cooped up ahead of economic meltdown, someone should be doing something to get it back.

A little hasty, perhaps Mar 18

Why would you give someone 65M?

dysfunctional, single-issue heads of government who seem to be constitutionally incapable of manning up in a real emergency.

Some columnists who know about these things claim that the lady had certain ambitions. Royal designs. A place at the palace. A leg-up in exchange for a leg-… well, they say some frightful things, let me tell you. In the last few years Felipe’s been doing his best to showcase a new squeaky-clean monarchy, which is no mean task, considering the past shenanigans of his pop and his commoner bruv-in-law. The latter’s now in prison for major cookie-jar misdemeanours various (F’s sister was also investigated on what were originally his & her charges, but the prosecution did its level best in her defence (yes, you read that right), and she was let off with a slap on the wrists, but someone had to pay, so her husband had to go to the slammer). Well, as the only male inmate of a female Big House, but still rather unpleasant when you’re used to the good life. So the latest move was to waive any claims on his father’s legacy. This was announced a few days ago, well timed indeed, what with all the Covid-19 Coronavirus Cafuffle, and it looked good at first sight. Except that he’s not actually waiving all of it. Just any dodgy bits.

Would it not be sensible to wait a few months - or even longer - before we jump to politically-tinted conclusions?

The banging continues.

It's very early days for this crisis. I don't see the UK doing noticeably worse or better than other European countries at this point, nor do I particularly disagree with the government's approach. Every state is trying to find something that works for their own specific set of circumstances, which are changing day by day as part of a protean global situation unprecedented in its scope.

[Edited at 2020-03-19 08:08 GMT]

This is not, after all, a competition.

This is why I defend those alleged "authoritarian measures"

Angie Garbarino

Mar 19

French to Italian

Please see this link, I am terribly sorrow for my Country, can't stop crying

No Mar 18

https://www.giornaledibrescia.it/italia-ed-estero/l-esercito-porta-i-feretri-bergamaschi-fuori-dalla-regione-1.3467998?fbclid=IwAR1lky48ZhAtI78xH5Ajcxt4kTcXhuX9ZYQJKcyZ1LUfQ3X4yxu6gk9dSLg

Just more infected. I see you don't know these countries well, I do, as I am Italian citizen living in Spain (resident) now blocked in Italy. I recommend to be more informed before stating.

Local time: 00:36

Regards

a turn for the worse

London's not calling Mar 18

First three cases in Mauritius were confirmed last evening.

Here's the latest update from the Financial Times about plans to put London on lockdown by this coming weekend:

I didn't know until I arrived at the supermarket this morning.

Officials are "being briefed on plans to close down London — the worst affected part of Britain — as early as Friday, with police being put on standby to prevent the possible looting of deserted town centres.

The whole village squeezed into it.

According to one person briefed on the proposal, there would be a full lockdown of the capital with only one person allowed to leave home at a time, with no entry to local shopping areas.

Some people were wearing masks.

Supermarkets would be guarded by police, while pharmacies would be among the few other shops to remain open.

Those who didn't have one fashioned one from a scarf or towel.

Two officials briefed on the proposals said residents and business would be given just 12 hours’ notice of the new restrictions. They could initially be in place for about a fortnight."

The boy I know in the vegetable section told me,

According to the FT article (at https://www.ft.com/content/4648d3d4-693c-11ea-a3c9-1fe6fedcca75 if you can get behind the paywall), this could be followed by a lockdown for the whole country.

'Coronavirus.

Informed Mar 18

Buy beaucoup!

Angie Garbarino wrote:

Buy beaucoup!'

If the virus doesn't infect at a distance of two metres in open air, then it helps nobody to make it illegal to be outside, provided that this distance is observed, regardless of how infected the country is. But it may destabilise some people more quickly if they are confined inside than if they were allowed some fresh air and exercise. This could exacerbate depression, violence and suicide and generally make people less able to cope with the stress.

Some customers arrived at the supermarket with shocked looks on their faces. I must have had one too.

Of course, I know how Italians and Spaniards are (please don't make presumptions about what I know or not based on conjecture, and please don't turn this debate into ad hominem attacks, which would just make everything more unpleasant for everybody), so perhaps the government consider that the two-metre rule will not be respected – i.e. they consider more authoritarian rules necessary than in the North.

An old man wanted to buy two baguettes.

I understand your frustration, but it's unfair to take it out on others. None of us wanted this.

After finding out where the end of the queue was, he decided to have something else for breakfast.

[Edited at 2020-03-19 00:29 GMT]

Handshakes and kissing on the cheek became namastes.

Two meter/six foot "rule" Mar 18

While I was waiting in the queue, the scene looked almost surreal.

This is just an advisory distance, not exact science. The virus can evidently hang around in the air (especially still air) for several hours, so you can keep 2m/6ft away from everybody else and still be infected. It can mitigate the risk, it doesn't remove it.

Last night I sent a message to a concerned friend in China, telling her everything on my side was fine. It is still fine, though.

Inside/outside Mar 18

And I brace myself for worse.

This is actually a very interesting question. It seems unlikely that the virus could hang around in the air outside for several hours. How would it not be blown away?

Local time: 15:36

https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/stephaniemlee/coronavirus-plastic-stainless-steel-surfaces describes some recent experiments:

German government planning a €40bn support package for solo freelancers...

'The scientists ran a battery of tests with a strain of SARS-CoV-2. They sprayed it into a rotating drum and measured how long it stayed in the air: three hours.'

...specifically including translators and interpreters.

Three hours in a confined environment. But we're talking open air.

The support will be aimed solely at solo freelancers without any employees, and will consist of a mixture of bridge loans and direct support payments.

'He also noted that in the open air, viruses tend to dry out from humidity or be killed off by ultraviolet light.'

At least one national government acknowledges the importance of ensuring that translators and intepreters can weather this crisis!

Has anyone found more information about this?

Universal?

Some countries ban outside exercise, France allows it if you carry a form (as always, paperwork is very important in France), others have no restrictions. Obviously the risk is higher in a crowd in a city than in a sleepy province town. But what do we know for sure?

Will the sensible ones who have set enough aside over the years to weather such storms also receive these handouts?

Thursday 19 March – a right royal virus Mar 19

Local time: 16:36

Went down for the paper. Stairs, but no mask and just the plastic gloves. ‘Basque Country just shy of 1,000 infected, 40 dead and “the worst is yet to come”’, croaks the headline. Golly. I always need my coffee before I do anything in the mornings, but today it mightn’t hurt to throw a shot or two of Jameson’s into the mug of coffee. Or even throw a shot or two of coffee into the mug of Jameson’s. … but no, after this and the coffee it’s down to a round of exercises.

I suppose, YES

Last night at 8 pm we had the usual round of applause on the balconies for the healthcare workers, although I think it’s generally accepted and appreciated now that there are a lot of people out there working for the common good, and not just in the health service. But if people need their heroes, they also need a villain or two, and it’s difficult to consider a virus as villainous. The most obvious choice, then, is politicians, but Spain has been fed up with most of its politicians for years now, constantly bickering and incapable of forming viable governments, and there isn’t any particular politician who would fit the bill. So, step forward … …

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If you stashed your hard-earned money in the mattress in the basement, the govt. doesn't know that you set aside enough to weather the storm.

The name of the bug, “crown virus”, is rather unfortunate for Felipe. He would most probably have been watching the pre-recorded stint himself at the palace at nine o’clock. Having few neighbours within earshot at the palace, what he wouldn’t have heard as it was aired was the loud banging of saucepans from balconies. Albeit with many exceptions, of course, I tentatively venture that this generally occurred up and down the country, too, as I doubt it was just the Basque Country and Catalonia (for the obvious reasons), and the banging even got a ten-second slot on the news slightly later. The angry metal chorus is the reaction to what they’re calling “el virus de la corona”. And also, if PM Sánchez was a little late getting his act together, Felipe had been silent up to that point, with not one word to the great unwashed on the issue, and had slid into the crease even later.

Stay healthy and rich,

No space or time to go into it all here, but suffice it to say that the monarchy has had its trials and tribulations in the last few years. The saucepan fracas concerns his father, the ex-king, who abdicated in his favour, and the news, which broke recently, of the sum of 65 million euros pa reportedly donated to an aristocratic Nordic lady of his acquaintance, by way of a token of his affection. The first thing you think is, if you can give away 65M to someone, you obviously have a lot more than that stashed away somewhere. An awful lot, a big big lot, a huge ginormous lot. But where?

lee

Not in one of those patriotic transparent Spanish bank accounts, surely. No, silly, sshh – say the chattering classes, and murmur the words “bank”, “Swiss” and “accounts”, though not in that order. And the people on the balconies think that, especially with everyone cooped up ahead of economic meltdown, someone should be doing something to get it back.

Details to come

Why would you give someone 65M?

That level of detail is not addressed in the German media, but I suspect the level of available support will be based on a) income in previous FY/last FY for which an income tax return was filed and b) order books/current income in FY 2020.

Some columnists who know about these things claim that the lady had certain ambitions. Royal designs. A place at the palace. A leg-up in exchange for a leg-… well, they say some frightful things, let me tell you. In the last few years Felipe’s been doing his best to showcase a new squeaky-clean monarchy, which is no mean task, considering the past shenanigans of his pop and his commoner bruv-in-law. The latter’s now in prison for major cookie-jar misdemeanours various (F’s sister was also investigated on what were originally his & her charges, but the prosecution did its level best in her defence (yes, you read that right), and she was let off with a slap on the wrists, but someone had to pay, so her husband had to go to the slammer). Well, as the only male inmate of a female Big House, but still rather unpleasant when you’re used to the good life. So the latest move was to waive any claims on his father’s legacy. This was announced a few days ago, well timed indeed, what with all the Covid-19 Coronavirus Cafuffle, and it looked good at first sight. Except that he’s not actually waiving all of it. Just any dodgy bits.

In Germany at least, the federal government can't go around checking what sort of savings people have without having a watertight legal basis.

The banging continues.

Just for info

[Edited at 2020-03-19 08:08 GMT]

Until today 19 March, jogging outside in Italy is NOT forbidden,

This is why I defend those alleged "authoritarian measures"

BUT since there are more than 33.000 infected people and almost 500 deceased in 1 day,

Mar 19

AND because people continue to do jogging in the parks, and playing football (together), it is possible that Government will forbid sports outside.

Please see this link, I am terribly sorrow for my Country, can't stop crying

BUT until today it is NOT "yet" forbidden.

https://www.giornaledibrescia.it/italia-ed-estero/l-esercito-porta-i-feretri-bergamaschi-fuori-dalla-regione-1.3467998?fbclid=IwAR1lky48ZhAtI78xH5Ajcxt4kTcXhuX9ZYQJKcyZ1LUfQ3X4yxu6gk9dSLg

Local time: 21:36

Local time: 00:36

@Angie

a turn for the worse

I thought they were well past that stage in Italy ...!

First three cases in Mauritius were confirmed last evening.

I'm pretty sure you can't do it here, and we're far behind them.

I didn't know until I arrived at the supermarket this morning.

Chin up, Angie!!

The whole village squeezed into it.

@Mervyn

Some people were wearing masks.

Thanks, my 2 countries (Italy and Spain) are suffering a lot, let's hope... but it will be a long difficult path.

Those who didn't have one fashioned one from a scarf or towel.

Local time: 20:36

The boy I know in the vegetable section told me,

You jest, surely

'Coronavirus.

These are such strange times that those who have not been lazy, feckless, entitled and selfish might, astonishing as it may seem, also get some assistance from the government in the form of non-means tested handouts.

Buy beaucoup!

Let's see what happens.

Buy beaucoup!'

Question is, could you accept money with a clear conscience?

Some customers arrived at the supermarket with shocked looks on their faces. I must have had one too.

If the consequence of not applying were that my children would go hungry, sure, I'd apply for a handout.

An old man wanted to buy two baguettes.

But I'd have to be desperate.

After finding out where the end of the queue was, he decided to have something else for breakfast.

It's like child benefit:

Handshakes and kissing on the cheek became namastes.

I've never applied for it because I don't think it's right that people earning a comfortable living should accept handouts from the state, or indeed anybody else.

While I was waiting in the queue, the scene looked almost surreal.

I am with you all the way, except...

Last night I sent a message to a concerned friend in China, telling her everything on my side was fine. It is still fine, though.

Dan Lucas wrote:

And I brace myself for worse.

... that it's not the matter of right or wrong. It's the matter of self-respect.

Local time: 15:36

Some of us just don't like being on welfare, as strange as that might sound:)

German government planning a €40bn support package for solo freelancers...

Anyway, what is it with everybody and his brother expecting the government to give them stuff?

...specifically including translators and interpreters.

It's not fair!

The support will be aimed solely at solo freelancers without any employees, and will consist of a mixture of bridge loans and direct support payments.

Accept?

At least one national government acknowledges the importance of ensuring that translators and intepreters can weather this crisis!

Apply?

Universal?

My inner Tory/toddler is just crying "it's not fair" at the thought of my taxes being used to bail out the feckless rather than those with a more legitimate need.

Will the sensible ones who have set enough aside over the years to weather such storms also receive these handouts?

A professional of any kind shouldn't need bailing out.

Local time: 16:36

But whatever, there are bigger things to worry about right now.

I suppose, YES

[img]https://scontent-lhr8-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/90102308\_1592909190863858\_2130555627108302848\_n.jpg?\_nc\_cat=110&\_nc\_sid=110474&\_nc\_ohc=8fE79-z8okUAX8KmMto&\_nc\_ht=scontent-lhr8-1.xx&oh=c44c652ff2047ddfd15faf9ae5bd5708&oe=5E98129A[/img]

Chris S wrote:

(Why doesn't that image show up?)

If you stashed your hard-earned money in the mattress in the basement, the govt. doesn't know that you set aside enough to weather the storm.

Image

Stay healthy and rich,

Why doesn't that image show up?

lee

It does if you write correct html:

Details to come

Annotation 2020-03-19 231203

That level of detail is not addressed in the German media, but I suspect the level of available support will be based on a) income in previous FY/last FY for which an income tax return was filed and b) order books/current income in FY 2020.

Matthias Brombach

In Germany at least, the federal government can't go around checking what sort of savings people have without having a watertight legal basis.

Member (2007)

Just for info

I wonder ...

Until today 19 March, jogging outside in Italy is NOT forbidden,

... what´s going on now on our beloved tropical\* island after the news, that German freelancers will be bailed out, at least those, who soon would go bankrupt.

BUT since there are more than 33.000 infected people and almost 500 deceased in 1 day,

Mervyn as the owner of that island (What was its name?

AND because people continue to do jogging in the parks, and playing football (together), it is possible that Government will forbid sports outside.

Doesn´t it begin with "C", like Cu... Cuba?

BUT until today it is NOT "yet" forbidden.

No: Cudoz, yes, Cudoz Island!) should know more about that effect.

Local time: 21:36

Will your island be totally deserted by them, when they have gone back to Germany, to apply for subsidies and the last sheets of toilet paper?

@Angie

\*

I thought they were well past that stage in Italy ...!

https://www.proz.com/forum/andrews\_corner/340567-future\_or\_no\_future\_advice\_to\_an\_18\_year\_old\_linguist-page2.html#2830351

I'm pretty sure you can't do it here, and we're far behind them.

Friday 20 March

Chin up, Angie!!

07:53

@Mervyn

Down the stairs again to throw out the rubbish and get the local rag.

Thanks, my 2 countries (Italy and Spain) are suffering a lot, let's hope... but it will be a long difficult path.

Only one plastic glove left, so I’ll have to pick up a few more at the fruit and veg joint later.

Local time: 20:36

I’m not out of shape, but I was so used to taking the lift, and I’m getting so used to not taking it now, that today the walk up seemed much shorter to me, and so I almost walked right on up to the fifth floor instead of stopping at our fourth floor.

You jest, surely

All sorts of home exercise routines available from all sorts of sources now.

These are such strange times that those who have not been lazy, feckless, entitled and selfish might, astonishing as it may seem, also get some assistance from the government in the form of non-means tested handouts.

All sorts of home everything routines available from all sorts of sources now.

Let's see what happens.

Sombre headline,

Question is, could you accept money with a clear conscience?

“Applause for Encarni”.

If the consequence of not applying were that my children would go hungry, sure, I'd apply for a handout.

We had our first death in the line of duty yesterday, a 52-year old nurse from Galdakao Hospital.

But I'd have to be desperate.

Staff at Bilbao’s hospitals had their own applause session, and after the habitual 8 pm applause here, our street’s balcony contingent and,

It's like child benefit:

I’m sure, all of Bilbao, were out again at 9 pm with candles (mobile torches for candleless households). Ironically,

I've never applied for it because I don't think it's right that people earning a comfortable living should accept handouts from the state, or indeed anybody else.

Encarni had been working a short time ago with the Basque Country’s first Covid-19 fatality here.

I am with you all the way, except...

Not ashamed to say tears are running down my face as I type.

Dan Lucas wrote:

They didn’t come last night, but they seem to start in when you write about it.

... that it's not the matter of right or wrong. It's the matter of self-respect.

But what I want to do is provide a little lightheartedness, a little bullshit, a little bollocks, a little something or other to lift my spirits, and those of others, so let’s get on with it:

Some of us just don't like being on welfare, as strange as that might sound:)

Ah yes, talking of spirits … I did look for the Jameson’s last night. All gone now, and I suddenly remember why.

Anyway, what is it with everybody and his brother expecting the government to give them stuff?

I’m not a big whiskey drinker, never have been, but I did have a bottle of the stuff. I had found it unopened at the back of a cupboard in my mum’s flat on the Wet Rock five years ago.

It's not fair!

Not that my mum was into that either, quite the contrary, but I think I had maybe bought it there at some point, and never used it.

Accept?

So I brought it back to Bilbao, and used it for hot whiskey.

Apply?

Quite a common concoction in a cold country, in the same way as in cold parts of Spain you’ll find people in bars at 6 am drinking brandy or anís with or without coffee before the daily round (uh-huh,

My inner Tory/toddler is just crying "it's not fair" at the thought of my taxes being used to bail out the feckless rather than those with a more legitimate need.

I was there in my misspent youth), but here I used the “hot whiskey plus” version for medicinal purposes.

A professional of any kind shouldn't need bailing out.

Oh yes, I can sense your cynicism.

But whatever, there are bigger things to worry about right now.

No, really.

[img]https://scontent-lhr8-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/90102308\_1592909190863858\_2130555627108302848\_n.jpg?\_nc\_cat=110&\_nc\_sid=110474&\_nc\_ohc=8fE79-z8okUAX8KmMto&\_nc\_ht=scontent-lhr8-1.xx&oh=c44c652ff2047ddfd15faf9ae5bd5708&oe=5E98129A[/img]

Got an infernal cold?

(Why doesn't that image show up?)

All stuffed up?

Image

Hawking and spluttering all day long?

Why doesn't that image show up?

Not to worry.

It does if you write correct html:

Help is at hand.

Annotation 2020-03-19 231203

Throw a couple of fingers of Jameson’s into a glass, add lemon juice, honey and crushed clove heads.

Matthias Brombach

Then add hot water, stir, and hey presto, get that brown potion down the hatch.

Member (2007)

Works a treat.

I wonder ...

Well, I must admit it’s more psychological than anything else – after two or three of those you don’t give a shit about your cold anymore, sunshine, you just lie down, go to sleep, and wake up ready to split rocks at a kick.

... what´s going on now on our beloved tropical\* island after the news, that German freelancers will be bailed out, at least those, who soon would go bankrupt.

I’m half-wondering whether to push it as a method for dealing with the initial symptoms of Covid-19.

Mervyn as the owner of that island (What was its name?

Along the lines of that US missionary who was showing some Indo-American natives the horrors of alcohol centuries ago.

Doesn´t it begin with "C", like Cu... Cuba?

He put a few worms in a glass, poured some whiskey over them, and the worms promptly shrivelled up and died.

No: Cudoz, yes, Cudoz Island!) should know more about that effect.

He then said triumphantly to his audience,

Will your island be totally deserted by them, when they have gone back to Germany, to apply for subsidies and the last sheets of toilet paper?

“Now, what does that prove?”, whereupon one of them said, “Er … if you’ve got worms, drink whiskey?”

\*

Boom-boom!

https://www.proz.com/forum/andrews\_corner/340567-future\_or\_no\_future\_advice\_to\_an\_18\_year\_old\_linguist-page2.html#2830351

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page7.html

Friday 20 March

Jean Dimitriadis

07:53

Different spirits

Down the stairs again to throw out the rubbish and get the local rag.

Mar 20

Only one plastic glove left, so I’ll have to pick up a few more at the fruit and veg joint later.

Hey Mervyn,

I’m not out of shape, but I was so used to taking the lift, and I’m getting so used to not taking it now, that today the walk up seemed much shorter to me, and so I almost walked right on up to the fifth floor instead of stopping at our fourth floor.

That brown potion of yours was what made me look forward to getting ill as a kid.

All sorts of home exercise routines available from all sorts of sources now.

Not having school and getting an even bigger share of adult attention was already massively sweetening the... pill(s), (I hated runny noses, and blocked nostrils, having to switch sides all the time while bedridden), but this magic concoction is responsible for my fond memories.

All sorts of home everything routines available from all sorts of sources now.

Our version swapped whiskey for cognac, and was garlic-free.

Sombre headline,

I don't know if the latter ingredient would have altered the (placebo) effects... or my sweet memories.

“Applause for Encarni”.

Most probably.

We had our first death in the line of duty yesterday, a 52-year old nurse from Galdakao Hospital.

Also, I'm no drinker either (never have been), but I thought worms were mostly found in Tequilas or Mezcal bottles?

Staff at Bilbao’s hospitals had their own applause session, and after the habitual 8 pm applause here, our street’s balcony contingent and,

Different spirits, different memories.

I’m sure, all of Bilbao, were out again at 9 pm with candles (mobile torches for candleless households). Ironically,

Thank you for keeping this diary and for lifting our spirits.

Encarni had been working a short time ago with the Basque Country’s first Covid-19 fatality here.

Brian Joyce

Not ashamed to say tears are running down my face as I type.

peekabooo

They didn’t come last night, but they seem to start in when you write about it.

I just wanted to say I'm thinking of you all.

But what I want to do is provide a little lightheartedness, a little bullshit, a little bollocks, a little something or other to lift my spirits, and those of others, so let’s get on with it:

Since the coronavirus there has been a moratorium on evictions, which worked out for me since my landlord was threatening an eviction notice.

Ah yes, talking of spirits … I did look for the Jameson’s last night. All gone now, and I suddenly remember why.

Every cloud has a silver lining!

I’m not a big whiskey drinker, never have been, but I did have a bottle of the stuff. I had found it unopened at the back of a cupboard in my mum’s flat on the Wet Rock five years ago.

I take inspiration from the life of Leonardo Da Vince who lived through a plague for 2 years.

Not that my mum was into that either, quite the contrary, but I think I had maybe bought it there at some point, and never used it.

He didn't complain once but rolled up his sleeves and painted the last supper for a bunch of un-grateful monks who expected him to work for free.

So I brought it back to Bilbao, and used it for hot whiskey.

Last supper, get it. God be with you all in this time of uncertainty.

Quite a common concoction in a cold country, in the same way as in cold parts of Spain you’ll find people in bars at 6 am drinking brandy or anís with or without coffee before the daily round (uh-huh,

London stalling

I was there in my misspent youth), but here I used the “hot whiskey plus” version for medicinal purposes.

I must admit that Chris and others are probably right, and that Wales and other remote areas are much safer.

Oh yes, I can sense your cynicism.

All that fresh air. Sheep grazing quietly in the meadows as choirs sing in the valleys.

No, really.

Pleasant and leafy. Sleepy towns and villages.

Got an infernal cold?

Attractive.

All stuffed up?

To other people.

Hawking and spluttering all day long?

People from other places.

Not to worry.

Lots of other places.

Help is at hand.

Could be a delightful place for a little getaway from other parts of the country.

Throw a couple of fingers of Jameson’s into a glass, add lemon juice, honey and crushed clove heads.

Get away from

Then add hot water, stir, and hey presto, get that brown potion down the hatch.

The Smoke this weekend, yes, why not?

It’s a free country.

Works a treat.

Well, I must admit it’s more psychological than anything else – after two or three of those you don’t give a shit about your cold anymore, sunshine, you just lie down, go to sleep, and wake up ready to split rocks at a kick.

Maybe right now a big man in London is thinking of doing just that.

I’m half-wondering whether to push it as a method for dealing with the initial symptoms of Covid-19.

Especially as he’s had a bit of a cough the last few days, and some of that country air could be just the ticket.

So this afternoon he loads his big arse into his big car and he heads over your way.

Along the lines of that US missionary who was showing some Indo-American natives the horrors of alcohol centuries ago.

He put a few worms in a glass, poured some whiskey over them, and the worms promptly shrivelled up and died.

He stops for petrol on the way at a service station not too far from where you live and he puts his fat sweaty hands all over the petrol pump, he goes inside and pays for it with a card or cash, all plastered with his big fat sweat.

He then said triumphantly to his audience,

Then, because cor, strewth, it’s hot today, he calls in at the Crown and Daffodil and has a pint of Best sitting at the bar with his big fat arse oozing sweat all over the stool and his big fat pinkies leaving their mark all over the bar, the money, the change, and the glass the barmaid’s about to clear away.

“Now, what does that prove?”, whereupon one of them said, “Er … if you’ve got worms, drink whiskey?”

Yes, that barmaid.

Mm, this Welsh wench is a bit of all right, he thinks and, men being what we are, after another pint he might even think he’s in with a chance simply because she’s pleasant and smiles at him, even though that merely means she’s good at her job, so he may try on a bit of in-her-face chatting-up, breathing his big fat foul breath all around her and anyone else at the bar.

Boom-boom!

And so he has a pleasant weekend, although he just can’t seem to get rid of the dry cough wherever he goes – the hotel, the newspaper shop, the tobacconist’s, the tourist information centre, a few more jars in the snug at the Dog and Leek, the supermarket …

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page7.html

Oh yes, the supermarket.

Jean Dimitriadis

Maybe he’s just been in that new Lego supermarket.

Different spirits

Has he?

Mar 20

He might have gone in there, yes.

Hey Mervyn,

Picking up this and picking up that, smearing his vile sweat all over everything, taking out coins and notes again and sneezing as he does so.

That brown potion of yours was what made me look forward to getting ill as a kid.

Not much space in that supermarket, is there?

Not having school and getting an even bigger share of adult attention was already massively sweetening the... pill(s), (I hated runny noses, and blocked nostrils, having to switch sides all the time while bedridden), but this magic concoction is responsible for my fond memories.

No, there isn’t.

Our version swapped whiskey for cognac, and was garlic-free.

Pretty confined.

I don't know if the latter ingredient would have altered the (placebo) effects... or my sweet memories.

Very cramped indeed.

Most probably.

Hardly room to swing a cat.

Also, I'm no drinker either (never have been), but I thought worms were mostly found in Tequilas or Mezcal bottles?

And a very small door, too.

Different spirits, different memories.

That chap will have difficulty getting out with all that bog roll.

Thank you for keeping this diary and for lifting our spirits.

Do you know, he reminds me of someone.

Brian Joyce

It’s that biker’s helmet. Just can’t place him right now.

peekabooo

Oh well, I suppose I’ll remember later.

I just wanted to say I'm thinking of you all.

He does look a bit cross, though.

Since the coronavirus there has been a moratorium on evictions, which worked out for me since my landlord was threatening an eviction notice.

Why the knitted brow?

Every cloud has a silver lining!

Is it because he was kept waiting behind a big fat sweaty man hawking and spluttering all around him in the queue at the till?

I take inspiration from the life of Leonardo Da Vince who lived through a plague for 2 years.

And maybe right now a young lady in Manchester is thinking exactly the same thing.

He didn't complain once but rolled up his sleeves and painted the last supper for a bunch of un-grateful monks who expected him to work for free.

So she rings up her girly friends, and all five of them get excited, and the whole gaggle of them descend on Wales for the weekend.

Last supper, get it. God be with you all in this time of uncertainty.

And a plumber in Leeds, and an elderly couple in Weston-super-Mare, and a whole family in Birmingham, and so it goes on.

London stalling

Wales. Safe as houses.

I must admit that Chris and others are probably right, and that Wales and other remote areas are much safer.

All this reminds me of a story about a fire-and-brimstone Scottish Presbyterian minister haranguing his flock one Sunday morning:

All that fresh air. Sheep grazing quietly in the meadows as choirs sing in the valleys.

“ … and, on yon terrrrrible day, when the Lorrrrd casts ye intae yon lake of fire, ye’ll cry out in yer pain to the Lorrrrd:

Pleasant and leafy. Sleepy towns and villages.

“Lorrrrd, Lorrrd, ah didnae ken [I didn’t know]!”

Attractive.

“And what will the Lorrrd say to ye?

To other people.

The Lorrrd will look down on ye, and in his infinite merrrcy and wisdom, he’ll say: “Aye, but ye feckin’ well ken the noo!”

People from other places.

[Yes, but you know now - rough translation]

Lots of other places.

Point taken, Mervyn. But...

Could be a delightful place for a little getaway from other parts of the country.

Helmet boy spent six hours on his bike today and saw a grand total of two cars and two walkers.

Get away from

They looked like incomers so obviously he fired a patriotic snot-rocket in their direction.

The Smoke this weekend, yes, why not?

Bull’s eye!

It’s a free country.

His irresponsibility knew no bounds.

Maybe right now a big man in London is thinking of doing just that.

He even cycled gaily through a leek field.

Especially as he’s had a bit of a cough the last few days, and some of that country air could be just the ticket.

Well, that’ll come home to roost in the summer when all there is to eat is about three sheep per capita.

So this afternoon he loads his big arse into his big car and he heads over your way.

But when he got to the Dog and Daff for a pint and a good sneeze, London man wasn’t actually there, because halfway down the M4 he sadly became one of the many more people killed on the roads each year than are likely to succumb to the Coronavirus.

He stops for petrol on the way at a service station not too far from where you live and he puts his fat sweaty hands all over the petrol pump, he goes inside and pays for it with a card or cash, all plastered with his big fat sweat.

Luckily, though, the Manx girls are up for a laugh.

Then, because cor, strewth, it’s hot today, he calls in at the Crown and Daffodil and has a pint of Best sitting at the bar with his big fat arse oozing sweat all over the stool and his big fat pinkies leaving their mark all over the bar, the money, the change, and the glass the barmaid’s about to clear away.

He shoots, he scores...

Yes, that barmaid.

Sometimes it’s hard to get hysterical.

Mm, this Welsh wench is a bit of all right, he thinks and, men being what we are, after another pint he might even think he’s in with a chance simply because she’s pleasant and smiles at him, even though that merely means she’s good at her job, so he may try on a bit of in-her-face chatting-up, breathing his big fat foul breath all around her and anyone else at the bar.

Agneta Pallinder

And so he has a pleasant weekend, although he just can’t seem to get rid of the dry cough wherever he goes – the hotel, the newspaper shop, the tobacconist’s, the tourist information centre, a few more jars in the snug at the Dog and Leek, the supermarket …

Message to moderator - keep this thread up top, please!

Oh yes, the supermarket.

Mar 21

Maybe he’s just been in that new Lego supermarket.

Please, moderators, could you pin this delightful thread to the top of the forum, at least for a while.

Has he?

It has become my morning tonic and I would hate to lose sight of it.

He might have gone in there, yes.

Saturday 21 March – The CCO

Picking up this and picking up that, smearing his vile sweat all over everything, taking out coins and notes again and sneezing as he does so.

Someone WhatsApped me about this Translator Complaints Service.

Not much space in that supermarket, is there?

Yippee, a godsend for people like us.

No, there isn’t.

There’s nothing we like more than a good gripe, a wistful whinge, a mournful moan, is there?

Pretty confined.

Just stick the words “unacceptable rates!!”, “late payment!!”, “no urgent fee!!” in any post title, and you’ll have two hundred hits within five minutes.

Very cramped indeed.

So I just couldn’t stop myself from calling the helpline …

Hardly room to swing a cat.

When they picked up, all I could hear at first was a lot of hammering and shouting in the background. Then he came on the line:

And a very small door, too.

“Good morning, Translator Complaints Service, CCO here.” – more hammering –

That chap will have difficulty getting out with all that bog roll.

“What can I do for you?”

Do you know, he reminds me of someone.

“CCO?” I asked, as the hammering grew louder.

It’s that biker’s helmet. Just can’t place him right now.

“Yes, CCO” – hammer, hammer, hammer – “Chief Complaints Officer.

Oh well, I suppose I’ll remember later.

It’s my job to …” – hammerhammerhammerhammer … “ … oh, bloody hell …”

He does look a bit cross, though.

His voice faded a little at this point because he had obviously put down the phone, but I could hear him clearly:

Why the knitted brow?

“ … do you HAVE to do that now, for Pete’s sake?

Is it because he was kept waiting behind a big fat sweaty man hawking and spluttering all around him in the queue at the till?

Or keep it down a bit, can’t you?

And maybe right now a young lady in Manchester is thinking exactly the same thing.

Can’t you see I’m trying to work here?”

So she rings up her girly friends, and all five of them get excited, and the whole gaggle of them descend on Wales for the weekend.

The hammering stopped, and I could hear someone apologising in a dreary monotone mumble a bit farther off.

And a plumber in Leeds, and an elderly couple in Weston-super-Mare, and a whole family in Birmingham, and so it goes on.

He came back on the line:

Wales. Safe as houses.

“Sorry about that. It’s the air conditioning.

All this reminds me of a story about a fire-and-brimstone Scottish Presbyterian minister haranguing his flock one Sunday morning:

Right behind me here.

“ … and, on yon terrrrrible day, when the Lorrrrd casts ye intae yon lake of fire, ye’ll cry out in yer pain to the Lorrrrd:

They’ve been banging at it since 8 this morning.

“Lorrrrd, Lorrrd, ah didnae ken [I didn’t know]!”

And I’m on my own as well.

“And what will the Lorrrd say to ye?

Two secretaries, and they’re both out at the same time.

The Lorrrd will look down on ye, and in his infinite merrrcy and wisdom, he’ll say: “Aye, but ye feckin’ well ken the noo!”

Surely the bloody point of having two secretaries is that one goes out and the other one covers.

[Yes, but you know now - rough translation]

But no, no, off they go, the two of them, squawking about the weekend and clubbing and Kevin’s new pad and Dave’s brother’s new car … anyway, er …?”

Point taken, Mervyn. But...

“Well,”, I said, “I’ve got a complaint, and the fact is that …”

Helmet boy spent six hours on his bike today and saw a grand total of two cars and two walkers.

“YOU have?

They looked like incomers so obviously he fired a patriotic snot-rocket in their direction.

You’ve got a complaint?

Bull’s eye!

Tell me about it.

His irresponsibility knew no bounds.

You should see what I have to put up with, old son. I went to work early this morning just to get away from the missus.

He even cycled gaily through a leek field.

Went ballistic on me at breakfast, she did.

Well, that’ll come home to roost in the summer when all there is to eat is about three sheep per capita.

All for nothing, too. She asked me if we could have her mother for dinner on Friday, and all I said, all I said, right, was “Might be a bit tough, love - couldn’t we have hake and peas instead?”

But when he got to the Dog and Daff for a pint and a good sneeze, London man wasn’t actually there, because halfway down the M4 he sadly became one of the many more people killed on the roads each year than are likely to succumb to the Coronavirus.

The language she used.

Luckily, though, the Manx girls are up for a laugh.

Well.

He shoots, he scores...

Some of the words I knew, and the rest she must have been making up.

Sometimes it’s hard to get hysterical.

I thought she was going to throw the mug of coffee at the wall, she was so …”

Agneta Pallinder

I thought I’d better stick my oar in fast.

Message to moderator - keep this thread up top, please!

“You see, I have a customer with an urgent job who doesn’t appreciate a family circumstance I’m experiencing at this time, and …”

Mar 21

“Family problems, eh?

Please, moderators, could you pin this delightful thread to the top of the forum, at least for a while.

Don’t get me started, son.

It has become my morning tonic and I would hate to lose sight of it.

It’s not just her indoors, either. Her sister’s kid went and got herself knocked up, didn’t she, yes, had to drop out of her last year at school, and she’s staying with us for the last two months before the big day because sister can’t handle her AND work AND her mother AND the other two kids.

Saturday 21 March – The CCO

So there she is lying around all day eating gherkins by the bucket and throwing up all the time.

Someone WhatsApped me about this Translator Complaints Service.

When she’s not sitting in front of the dressing table splodging on makeup and bleating about being fat, am I fat, do I look fat, oh God I’m so fat, I’m fat, aren’t I, all the live long day.

Yippee, a godsend for people like us.

And the proud father-to-be’s with us too.

There’s nothing we like more than a good gripe, a wistful whinge, a mournful moan, is there?

What a sorry piece of work HE is.

Just stick the words “unacceptable rates!!”, “late payment!!”, “no urgent fee!!” in any post title, and you’ll have two hundred hits within five minutes.

The IQ of a subnormal prawn.

So I just couldn’t stop myself from calling the helpline …

No job, of course, so no household contribution, but he does his best to struggle through the day with can after can of Newkie Brown.

When they picked up, all I could hear at first was a lot of hammering and shouting in the background. Then he came on the line:

Only one known skill, the ability to roll a spliff with one hand and drink with the other.

“Good morning, Translator Complaints Service, CCO here.” – more hammering –

Blinking flip.

“What can I do for you?”

You should see the little prat, with his orange, blue and green hair.

“CCO?” I asked, as the hammering grew louder.

And the way he talks, Christ, it drives me mad.

“Yes, CCO” – hammer, hammer, hammer – “Chief Complaints Officer.

Every sentence ends with Know what I mean?

It’s my job to …” – hammerhammerhammerhammer … “ … oh, bloody hell …”

How can you do that?

His voice faded a little at this point because he had obviously put down the phone, but I could hear him clearly:

I could understand it in a normal sentence like,

“ … do you HAVE to do that now, for Pete’s sake?

“Now, you have to be careful driving through this junction,

Or keep it down a bit, can’t you?

Fred, because there’s not much visibility and six roads all converging together, more traffic going through there than Harvey Weinstein’s crotch, know what I mean?”, but it’s like a permanent verbal appendage with this dickhead:

Can’t you see I’m trying to work here?”

“Going to switch on the telly, know what I mean?”

The hammering stopped, and I could hear someone apologising in a dreary monotone mumble a bit farther off.

- The lads managed to score in the dying seconds, know what I mean?”

He came back on the line:

– “Think I’ll have some jam on my toast, know what I mean?” -

“Sorry about that. It’s the air conditioning.

“Left the post for you on the table in the hall, know what I mean?”

Right behind me here.

The stupid twat doesn’t even know he’s saying it, either.

They’ve been banging at it since 8 this morning.

He said that last one about the post to me yesterday, and I said,

And I’m on my own as well.

“Yes, I do know what you mean.” He just looked at me blankly and said,

Two secretaries, and they’re both out at the same time.

“What do you mean, you know what I mean?”

Surely the bloody point of having two secretaries is that one goes out and the other one covers.

Well, I suppose I should be grateful he didn’t say:

But no, no, off they go, the two of them, squawking about the weekend and clubbing and Kevin’s new pad and Dave’s brother’s new car … anyway, er …?”

“What do you mean, you know what I mean, know what I mean?

“Well,”, I said, “I’ve got a complaint, and the fact is that …”

...”

“YOU have?

He stopped to draw breath, and I got in again:

You’ve got a complaint?

“You see, my wife was going to go on a trip in the car, but it broke down, and …”

Tell me about it.

“With you, lad, with you.

You should see what I have to put up with, old son. I went to work early this morning just to get away from the missus.

Say no more.

Went ballistic on me at breakfast, she did.

Cars?

All for nothing, too. She asked me if we could have her mother for dinner on Friday, and all I said, all I said, right, was “Might be a bit tough, love - couldn’t we have hake and peas instead?”

I’ve got that T-shirt all right.

The language she used.

I feel your pain, don’t think I don’t.

Well.

Don’t talk to me about cars.

Some of the words I knew, and the rest she must have been making up.

I left mine in the garage the other day with a dodgy clutch.

I thought she was going to throw the mug of coffee at the wall, she was so …”

Just the clutch, right?

I thought I’d better stick my oar in fast.

Just the frigging clutch.

“You see, I have a customer with an urgent job who doesn’t appreciate a family circumstance I’m experiencing at this time, and …”

They told me it would set me back 150 or thereabouts, and I rang up later to see when exactly I could pick it up, because they’d said two or three days, and now they say about a fortnight.

“Family problems, eh?

A fortnight!

Don’t get me started, son.

Yes, they said, because there’d been “complications”. Complications?,

It’s not just her indoors, either. Her sister’s kid went and got herself knocked up, didn’t she, yes, had to drop out of her last year at school, and she’s staying with us for the last two months before the big day because sister can’t handle her AND work AND her mother AND the other two kids.

I said, you’re a garage, aren’t you, not a fucking hospital.

So there she is lying around all day eating gherkins by the bucket and throwing up all the time.

Yes, they said, they found a lot of other things, the battery and the carb, and some of the electrical stuff, and yes, it’s going to be more like 600 in the end.”

When she’s not sitting in front of the dressing table splodging on makeup and bleating about being fat, am I fat, do I look fat, oh God I’m so fat, I’m fat, aren’t I, all the live long day.

“Quite,” I broke in.

And the proud father-to-be’s with us too.

“It sounds dreadful.

What a sorry piece of work HE is.

You do seem to be having a time of it.

The IQ of a subnormal prawn.

All I can say is take a deep breath, count to ten, and start trying to resolve your problems one by one.

No job, of course, so no household contribution, but he does his best to struggle through the day with can after can of Newkie Brown.

Problems are really just a shedload of tiny problemettes, and you just go through them individually, address them and tick them off like on a check list”.

Only one known skill, the ability to roll a spliff with one hand and drink with the other.

“Don’t concern yourself,” he sighed.

Blinking flip.

“Anyway, I’d better hang up now.

You should see the little prat, with his orange, blue and green hair.

For the next caller, see. So take it easy, bruv.”

And the way he talks, Christ, it drives me mad.

“Hang on a minute, what about my complaint?

Every sentence ends with Know what I mean?

I haven’t even started in yet!”

How can you do that?

I could almost hear him smile down the phone.

I could understand it in a normal sentence like,

“Doesn’t work like that, mate.

“Now, you have to be careful driving through this junction,

What we do here is spout out all OUR complaints to YOU, and eventually you empathise so much and secretly feel so glad it’s not you that your own stuff fades into relative insignificance.

Fred, because there’s not much visibility and six roads all converging together, more traffic going through there than Harvey Weinstein’s crotch, know what I mean?”, but it’s like a permanent verbal appendage with this dickhead:

“Going to switch on the telly, know what I mean?”

And it works, too, doesn’t it?

- The lads managed to score in the dying seconds, know what I mean?”

In the end there, it was YOU trying to give ME advice and help ME out.

– “Think I’ll have some jam on my toast, know what I mean?” -

It’s a new consultancy format.

“Left the post for you on the table in the hall, know what I mean?”

The PTSQ Technique, they call it. By McKinsey or someone.”

The stupid twat doesn’t even know he’s saying it, either.

“What does PTSQ stand for?”

He said that last one about the post to me yesterday, and I said,

He sniffed.

“Yes, I do know what you mean.” He just looked at me blankly and said,

“God only knows. I don’t think anyone knows.

“What do you mean, you know what I mean?”

Just a name. Like the 4 Ps, the 7 Rs, the 10 Bs, all that tosh.

Well, I suppose I should be grateful he didn’t say:

Maybe it means nothing at all. A

“What do you mean, you know what I mean, know what I mean?

dds to the mystique. But I bet you’re feeling better now, aren’t you, knowing about all the bullshit I have to take?

...”

Like the Spanish say, ‘Misfortune of many, consolation of fools.’”

He stopped to draw breath, and I got in again:

Another phone rang in the background.

“You see, my wife was going to go on a trip in the car, but it broke down, and …”

“Gotta go. Have a nice day!”

“With you, lad, with you.

He was right, actually. I certainly was feeling much better.

Say no more.

Nobody watching

Cars?

Into our second week of quarantine, I find I’ve been given the dubious opportunity to catch up on some late-night Spanish reality shows.

I’ve got that T-shirt all right.

I’m aware it’s not just a Spanish thing, but here at least,

I feel your pain, don’t think I don’t.

TV nobody watching is big business for everybody and anybody involved.

Don’t talk to me about cars.

To be fair, technically not all the nobodies I refer to here are real nobodies known to nobody, because some of the nobodies are somebodies whom somebody, though perhaps not everybody, has heard of, but when all’s said and done, sadly each and every one of them is a nobody who is really nobody at all, even if somebody, anybody, or in some cases everybody, has heard of them.

I left mine in the garage the other day with a dodgy clutch.

I know it’s confusing, so let me explain that in Spain’s complex, sinister TV nobody-watch world there are three different categories.

Just the clutch, right?

There are the straight Nobodies (your plain vanilla anonymous everymen and everywomen), whose dream is to become TV Somebodies.

Just the frigging clutch.

And there are two types of Somebodies:

They told me it would set me back 150 or thereabouts, and I rang up later to see when exactly I could pick it up, because they’d said two or three days, and now they say about a fortnight.

Class I Somebodies, who in some way have been somebodies since some time ago - luvvies, crooners, bullfighters and their squeezes, people calling themselves journalists who specialise in who’s-sleeping-with-who sleaze (yes, I know it should be whom, don’t start, but certain journalistic details don’t bother them, see), minor politicians, particularly the turncoats, the promiscuous and the outright embittered, lesser known former TV presenters, and hangers-on various of all the foregoing are good examples.

A fortnight!

Or they may even have been fully-fledged somebodies since the very day they were born (normally the sprogs and other relations of the above), and their greatest though largely groundless fear is losing status as Somebodies, thereby becoming Nobodies to whom nobody or anybody would give the time of day.

Yes, they said, because there’d been “complications”. Complications?,

Then we have the Class II Somebodies (successful, or even unsuccessful, or colourful, sexually ambiguous or very much unambiguous, loudmouthed - and the louder the better -, outrageous, trashy, gorgeous, creepy, slimy or downright obnoxious former Big Brother contestants, that kind of person), who were outright nobodies before they became somebodies and would sooner die than go back to slumming it as nobodies, because everybody knows that nobody has time for somebody who is nobody, whereas anybody and everybody wants to hang out with somebody who is somebody.

I said, you’re a garage, aren’t you, not a fucking hospital.

Naturally there is quite a bit of tension between Class I Somebodies and Class II Somebodies, because some Class I Somebodies think that nobody can become a somebody just like that, whereas some Class II Somebodies, having served their time like nobody’s business on their way up from nobody to somebody, feel that anybody has a right to aspire to being a somebody, although both Class I and Class II tend to look down on the nobodies, and this is even true of some Class II Somebodies who used to be utter nobodies themselves.

Yes, they said, they found a lot of other things, the battery and the carb, and some of the electrical stuff, and yes, it’s going to be more like 600 in the end.”

There seems to be no rule to pinpoint exactly when a nobody actually becomes a somebody, especially because some somebodies may still not be known to everybody, though not to nobody, obviously, in the way that a nobody is not known to anybody (except to nobodies), whereas some somebodies are known to anybody, and indeed perhaps almost everybody.

“Quite,” I broke in.

Nobodies can also become somebodies by default when some somebody hooks up in some indirect way with their family or acquaintances, but the reverse is not true, i.e. somebodies do not automatically become nobodies when some nobody joins their circle, irrespective of whether somebody, anybody or nobody pays any attention to the newly arrived nobody.

“It sounds dreadful.

Once a somebody, always a somebody - nobody, not even a nobody, or in fact anybody at all, can turn anybody who is already a somebody into a nobody.

You do seem to be having a time of it.

So are we clear on professional nobodyism?

All I can say is take a deep breath, count to ten, and start trying to resolve your problems one by one.

The main exponent is a show which translates into English as “Save me”, but I’ve never understood that because, given the shouting and mauling that goes on there among the nobodies and somebodies,

Problems are really just a shedload of tiny problemettes, and you just go through them individually, address them and tick them off like on a check list”.

“Crucify me” or “Haul me over the coals naked” or “Chew my family up and spit us out in disgust in front of the entire nation” would be much more suitable titles. I’m not sure whether this is a purely Spanish trait, but the afternoon “Save me” has two stints, called “Orange” and “Lemon”.

“Don’t concern yourself,” he sighed.

It hasn’t been explained to me as such, but I’m guessing from what I’ve seen that Orange is a lighter, juicier, carefree version, while Lemon is much more zesty, in your face and bitter, bitter, bitter to the bitter, bitter, bitter end.

“Anyway, I’d better hang up now.

The High Priest of this programme is a man who deliberately manoeuvred from nobodyist beginnings to co-presenter and presenter of a string of ever more risqué screeching matches, and has scaled the dizzy heights of live yelling contests to reach the present cult slot that is “Save me”, which he minces through with occasional tantrums when things get out of hand.

For the next caller, see. So take it easy, bruv.”

As they often do, considering the vicious motley crew he has to put up with, and that’s just the main team, or the panel of “collaborators”, as they call them here, let alone the hapless somebodies and nobodies as “guests” invited to the set to bay at and be bayed at by nobodies and somebodies alike, in a kind of post-Orwellian Three-Hour Hate, the males among them all smugly sporting the same Fred Flintstone stubble so sharply traced and defined I could swear sometimes it’s a cardboard cutout glued to the face.

“Hang on a minute, what about my complaint?

And if you have a High Priest, better to have a High Priestess too. All hail to the Queen of Nobodyism.

I haven’t even started in yet!”

A text-book case to prove that absolutely anybody can go from absolute nobody to absolute somebody in absolutely no time at all.

I could almost hear him smile down the phone.

From ultra-humble beginnings, previously a quiet girl unused to media attention before she married a man who had already been a bullfighting somebody for quite some time.

“Doesn’t work like that, mate.

Doom was darkly prophesied from the start. It was more than risky, admittedly, a nobody betrothing her nobody self to a man whose somebodyism and enormous attraction to the opposite sex had once prompted organisers to put on a ladies-only bull gig for him to strut his sword stuff. In the end she must have realised, whispered those in the know dramatically to a spellbound nation, that he was using his other weapon of mass seduction elsewhere, a-stabbing and a-spearing and a-skewering a selection of swooning substitutes with it every which way.

What we do here is spout out all OUR complaints to YOU, and eventually you empathise so much and secretly feel so glad it’s not you that your own stuff fades into relative insignificance.

So it was that the fairy tale between the herbivore murderer and herself shattered into a thousand tragic pieces, and before long that shy little girl got herself a divorce, somebodyed up with a vengeance, and has been pouting and screeching and badmouthing about him and his new flame ever since, taking time out occasionally to lambast nobodies, somebodies and anybodies alike who dare question the word of the People’s Princess, as she came to be known.

And it works, too, doesn’t it?

Yes, it rings a bell, does it not?

In the end there, it was YOU trying to give ME advice and help ME out.

A kind of Spanish version of you-know-who, albeit several light years away in terms of class, infinitely more vulgar and trashy, propped up by all-in-one-go plastic surgery a few years ago, because the daily round as a full-time somebody takes its toll in the end, you know.

It’s a new consultancy format.

After a week or two without She Who Must Be Overpaid, Spain throbbed with excitement counting down the days leading up to her triumphant reappearance on set, with multiple cracks filled in, multiple sags pushed out, and a bit of general polishing, deburring and sprucing up inbetween.

The PTSQ Technique, they call it. By McKinsey or someone.”

This woman is the People’s Princess because She Has Been There. She Knows. She Knows About Men and Women.

“What does PTSQ stand for?”

She Knows About Love. She Knows About Hate.

He sniffed.

She Conducts Analyses Of Human Feelings and Suffering.

“God only knows. I don’t think anyone knows.

She Is A Professional Consultant On Treachery And Loyalty.

Just a name. Like the 4 Ps, the 7 Rs, the 10 Bs, all that tosh.

You can see I’m writing this out with initial caps, but I kid you not, this woman has honed her somebodiness to the extent that she can actually speak in capital letters.

Maybe it means nothing at all. A

She pulls no punches, tells it like what it is. “My Truth”, she calls it.

dds to the mystique. But I bet you’re feeling better now, aren’t you, knowing about all the bullshit I have to take?

Truth, right. Sincerity.

Like the Spanish say, ‘Misfortune of many, consolation of fools.’”

To this lass, sincerity is everything.

Another phone rang in the background.

Once you can fake that, the rest is easy.

“Gotta go. Have a nice day!”

As easy as taking a shedload of dosh from prime-time TV as an authority on we know not exactly what.

He was right, actually. I certainly was feeling much better.

Francine Oliveira

Nobody watching

Local time: 17:36

Into our second week of quarantine, I find I’ve been given the dubious opportunity to catch up on some late-night Spanish reality shows.

Portuguese to English

I’m aware it’s not just a Spanish thing, but here at least,

In Brazil, we are going downwards quickly

TV nobody watching is big business for everybody and anybody involved.

Aline Amorim wrote:

To be fair, technically not all the nobodies I refer to here are real nobodies known to nobody, because some of the nobodies are somebodies whom somebody, though perhaps not everybody, has heard of, but when all’s said and done, sadly each and every one of them is a nobody who is really nobody at all, even if somebody, anybody, or in some cases everybody, has heard of them.

Our public health service was already collapsing without covid-19.

I know it’s confusing, so let me explain that in Spain’s complex, sinister TV nobody-watch world there are three different categories.

Unfortunately, we cannot trust the president and most representatives to make strategic and intelligent decisions.

There are the straight Nobodies (your plain vanilla anonymous everymen and everywomen), whose dream is to become TV Somebodies.

There are still lots of people who are not taking it seriously and I just wonder when will they get it.

And there are two types of Somebodies:

The elderly are out on the streets, just living their lives, unwilling to quarantine themselves.

Class I Somebodies, who in some way have been somebodies since some time ago - luvvies, crooners, bullfighters and their squeezes, people calling themselves journalists who specialise in who’s-sleeping-with-who sleaze (yes, I know it should be whom, don’t start, but certain journalistic details don’t bother them, see), minor politicians, particularly the turncoats, the promiscuous and the outright embittered, lesser known former TV presenters, and hangers-on various of all the foregoing are good examples.

I left my house to stay with my parents so that they don't have to get out of their house.

Or they may even have been fully-fledged somebodies since the very day they were born (normally the sprogs and other relations of the above), and their greatest though largely groundless fear is losing status as Somebodies, thereby becoming Nobodies to whom nobody or anybody would give the time of day.

I love them, but it's very difficult to get used to a shared lockdown after years leaving alone...

Then we have the Class II Somebodies (successful, or even unsuccessful, or colourful, sexually ambiguous or very much unambiguous, loudmouthed - and the louder the better -, outrageous, trashy, gorgeous, creepy, slimy or downright obnoxious former Big Brother contestants, that kind of person), who were outright nobodies before they became somebodies and would sooner die than go back to slumming it as nobodies, because everybody knows that nobody has time for somebody who is nobody, whereas anybody and everybody wants to hang out with somebody who is somebody.

Yurim Jung

Naturally there is quite a bit of tension between Class I Somebodies and Class II Somebodies, because some Class I Somebodies think that nobody can become a somebody just like that, whereas some Class II Somebodies, having served their time like nobody’s business on their way up from nobody to somebody, feel that anybody has a right to aspire to being a somebody, although both Class I and Class II tend to look down on the nobodies, and this is even true of some Class II Somebodies who used to be utter nobodies themselves.

South Korea

There seems to be no rule to pinpoint exactly when a nobody actually becomes a somebody, especially because some somebodies may still not be known to everybody, though not to nobody, obviously, in the way that a nobody is not known to anybody (except to nobodies), whereas some somebodies are known to anybody, and indeed perhaps almost everybody.

Local time: 05:36

Nobodies can also become somebodies by default when some somebody hooks up in some indirect way with their family or acquaintances, but the reverse is not true, i.e. somebodies do not automatically become nobodies when some nobody joins their circle, irrespective of whether somebody, anybody or nobody pays any attention to the newly arrived nobody.

Member (Feb 2020)

Once a somebody, always a somebody - nobody, not even a nobody, or in fact anybody at all, can turn anybody who is already a somebody into a nobody.

English to Korean

So are we clear on professional nobodyism?

From South Korea

The main exponent is a show which translates into English as “Save me”, but I’ve never understood that because, given the shouting and mauling that goes on there among the nobodies and somebodies,

Mar 22

“Crucify me” or “Haul me over the coals naked” or “Chew my family up and spit us out in disgust in front of the entire nation” would be much more suitable titles. I’m not sure whether this is a purely Spanish trait, but the afternoon “Save me” has two stints, called “Orange” and “Lemon”.

Sunday 22 March

It hasn’t been explained to me as such, but I’m guessing from what I’ve seen that Orange is a lighter, juicier, carefree version, while Lemon is much more zesty, in your face and bitter, bitter, bitter to the bitter, bitter, bitter end.

Now, there are 8,897 confirmed cases of coronavirus in South Korea. I miss my friends...

The High Priest of this programme is a man who deliberately manoeuvred from nobodyist beginnings to co-presenter and presenter of a string of ever more risqué screeching matches, and has scaled the dizzy heights of live yelling contests to reach the present cult slot that is “Save me”, which he minces through with occasional tantrums when things get out of hand.

Sunday 22 March - "Bilbainada"!

As they often do, considering the vicious motley crew he has to put up with, and that’s just the main team, or the panel of “collaborators”, as they call them here, let alone the hapless somebodies and nobodies as “guests” invited to the set to bay at and be bayed at by nobodies and somebodies alike, in a kind of post-Orwellian Three-Hour Hate, the males among them all smugly sporting the same Fred Flintstone stubble so sharply traced and defined I could swear sometimes it’s a cardboard cutout glued to the face.

“I’m from Bilbao.”

And if you have a High Priest, better to have a High Priestess too. All hail to the Queen of Nobodyism.

That’s all I said to this chap.

A text-book case to prove that absolutely anybody can go from absolute nobody to absolute somebody in absolutely no time at all.

Maybe I was too glib about it.

From ultra-humble beginnings, previously a quiet girl unused to media attention before she married a man who had already been a bullfighting somebody for quite some time.

It’s a bit of a closed shop, because not everybody can be from here.

Doom was darkly prophesied from the start. It was more than risky, admittedly, a nobody betrothing her nobody self to a man whose somebodyism and enormous attraction to the opposite sex had once prompted organisers to put on a ladies-only bull gig for him to strut his sword stuff. In the end she must have realised, whispered those in the know dramatically to a spellbound nation, that he was using his other weapon of mass seduction elsewhere, a-stabbing and a-spearing and a-skewering a selection of swooning substitutes with it every which way.

A point of honour, really. I should add that the Basques have a certain reputation in the Spanish State, and the people of Bilbao more so, and not only because of the separatist movement, or an ancient and primitive-but-frighteningly-complicated language full of TXs and Ks, and compound words that are much longer than in Spanish or English.

So it was that the fairy tale between the herbivore murderer and herself shattered into a thousand tragic pieces, and before long that shy little girl got herself a divorce, somebodyed up with a vengeance, and has been pouting and screeching and badmouthing about him and his new flame ever since, taking time out occasionally to lambast nobodies, somebodies and anybodies alike who dare question the word of the People’s Princess, as she came to be known.

The long-word idea is the same as German, with the difference that the Germans simply add nouns to nouns or nouns to adjectives, but Euskera also throws in an extra letter or two or three to denote little bits and pieces of grammatical ideas and concepts of number and case, and manages to string the length of those words out even more.

Yes, it rings a bell, does it not?

The Basques are known for their strength competitions, which date back to a rural civilisation from the year dot - lifting stones weighing upwards of 300 kilos, chopping and sawing wood, humping up and down a walking course with a heavy chunk of iron in either fist in the shortest possible time, and a host of other daunting, sweaty challenges.

A kind of Spanish version of you-know-who, albeit several light years away in terms of class, infinitely more vulgar and trashy, propped up by all-in-one-go plastic surgery a few years ago, because the daily round as a full-time somebody takes its toll in the end, you know.

And the main exponents are held to be the men and women of Bilbao, but in their case it is extended to more than just all that physical stone-lifting and chunk-humping.

After a week or two without She Who Must Be Overpaid, Spain throbbed with excitement counting down the days leading up to her triumphant reappearance on set, with multiple cracks filled in, multiple sags pushed out, and a bit of general polishing, deburring and sprucing up inbetween.

They have a word, “bilbainada”, a quasi-superhuman feat of endurance that is supposedly only possible if you are a bilbaíno, a seemingly impossible undertaking which the people of Bilbao would simply take in their stride, batting nary a determined eyelid.

This woman is the People’s Princess because She Has Been There. She Knows. She Knows About Men and Women.

To exaggerate a little, for example, someone tells you they were up all night with a crying baby each night for a month despite a daily ten-hour stint at the office, or they had the relatives around the other day and cooked both lunch and dinner for twenty people, including three strict vegans, one coeiliac, and four vegetarians, or they read War and Peace and Anna Karenina in a single month while convalescing in hospital, … and when you say,

She Knows About Love. She Knows About Hate.

“Wow, that’s some going,” they could just smile and joke: “Hey, I’m from Bilbao.”

She Conducts Analyses Of Human Feelings and Suffering.

Conversely, when someone admits to a shortcoming, a fault or a foible, or has perhaps failed to make the grade in some way, they might use the same concept in mock self-deprecation:

She Is A Professional Consultant On Treachery And Loyalty.

“Well, yes, I’m from Bilbao, but not from the centre.”

You can see I’m writing this out with initial caps, but I kid you not, this woman has honed her somebodiness to the extent that she can actually speak in capital letters.

Talking of convalescing in hospital, the story goes that a man was found in the wreckage of the Twin Towers.

She pulls no punches, tells it like what it is. “My Truth”, she calls it.

Half-conscious, he told the paramedics he was fine.

Truth, right. Sincerity.

“Just a few scratches”, he croaked, and added “I’m from Bilbao”, whereupon he fainted away again.

To this lass, sincerity is everything.

Scratches, right.

Once you can fake that, the rest is easy.

His scratches were both legs broken in four or five places each, plus an arm, pelvis and three ribs, and he had a collapsed lung too.

As easy as taking a shedload of dosh from prime-time TV as an authority on we know not exactly what.

He also had some mysterious lacerations on his forearms and chest that the doctors couldn’t explain, because they didn’t square with the injuries he might have been expected to sustain in that scenario.

Francine Oliveira

The Feds were waiting to interview him because nobody could account for him anywhere either, and the doctors called them in about half an hour after he came round a day or two later.

Local time: 17:36

“So which of the towers were you in, sir?”, they asked,

Portuguese to English

“North or South?”

In Brazil, we are going downwards quickly

“Towers?” he says,

Aline Amorim wrote:

“Towers?

Our public health service was already collapsing without covid-19.

The last thing I remember is keeling over in the aisle after some son of a bitch stabbed me four or five times with what looked like a Stanley knife when I tried to stop him and his mates hijacking our plane.

Unfortunately, we cannot trust the president and most representatives to make strategic and intelligent decisions.

What towers?

There are still lots of people who are not taking it seriously and I just wonder when will they get it.

What IS all this stuff about towers?”

The elderly are out on the streets, just living their lives, unwilling to quarantine themselves.

Sometimes you have to earn it.

I left my house to stay with my parents so that they don't have to get out of their house.

Back to the first sentence of this - on that particular day I had run into a couple of chaps in the street, only one of whom I knew.

I love them, but it's very difficult to get used to a shared lockdown after years leaving alone...

There’d been no introductions, but we’d been talking for a while, and then the one I didn’t know asked me where I was from.

Yurim Jung

Must have been something I said, or the way I said it.

South Korea

I speak the language pretty fluently, but occasionally something gives you away, plus I don’t look very Basque because I have fairer hair and I don’t have their aquiline nose and sharp features, although people don’t always assume you aren’t Spanish-speaking.

Local time: 05:36

Sometimes, when it comes out, they say afterwards they just thought at first I was from another part of the State.

Member (Feb 2020)

“Bilbao,” I told him breezily. “I’m from Bilbao.”

English to Korean

The bloke I knew raised his eyebrows.

From South Korea

“Eh, what, you, from Bilbao?”

Mar 22

He turned to the other one.

Sunday 22 March

“No, he isn’t,” he told him.

Now, there are 8,897 confirmed cases of coronavirus in South Korea. I miss my friends...

“I’ve known this guy for years.

Sunday 22 March - "Bilbainada"!

He’s Irish.

“I’m from Bilbao.”

He’s a translator.”

That’s all I said to this chap.

His friend laughed.

Maybe I was too glib about it.

“Better leave being from Bilbao to the bilbaínos.

It’s a bit of a closed shop, because not everybody can be from here.

It’s a Bilbao thing.

A point of honour, really. I should add that the Basques have a certain reputation in the Spanish State, and the people of Bilbao more so, and not only because of the separatist movement, or an ancient and primitive-but-frighteningly-complicated language full of TXs and Ks, and compound words that are much longer than in Spanish or English.

You wouldn’t understand. Not being from Bilbao, I mean.”

The long-word idea is the same as German, with the difference that the Germans simply add nouns to nouns or nouns to adjectives, but Euskera also throws in an extra letter or two or three to denote little bits and pieces of grammatical ideas and concepts of number and case, and manages to string the length of those words out even more.

Naturally I couldn’t let him get away with that. I shrugged at this chap:

The Basques are known for their strength competitions, which date back to a rural civilisation from the year dot - lifting stones weighing upwards of 300 kilos, chopping and sawing wood, humping up and down a walking course with a heavy chunk of iron in either fist in the shortest possible time, and a host of other daunting, sweaty challenges.

“I understand perfectly. Me?

And the main exponents are held to be the men and women of Bilbao, but in their case it is extended to more than just all that physical stone-lifting and chunk-humping.

Not from Bilbao, me?

They have a word, “bilbainada”, a quasi-superhuman feat of endurance that is supposedly only possible if you are a bilbaíno, a seemingly impossible undertaking which the people of Bilbao would simply take in their stride, batting nary a determined eyelid.

You don’t know who you’re talking to here. I most certainly am from Bilbao.

To exaggerate a little, for example, someone tells you they were up all night with a crying baby each night for a month despite a daily ten-hour stint at the office, or they had the relatives around the other day and cooked both lunch and dinner for twenty people, including three strict vegans, one coeiliac, and four vegetarians, or they read War and Peace and Anna Karenina in a single month while convalescing in hospital, … and when you say,

I’ve strutted all the Bilbao stuff. My spoken Basque might be a little rusty now because I haven’t been practising it for years, but then a lot of people here don’t speak a word of it.

“Wow, that’s some going,” they could just smile and joke: “Hey, I’m from Bilbao.”

I’ve sipped the txakolina, I’ve eaten the txistorra and the txuleta, and I’ve listened to the txalaparta in the txoko while the txirimiri pitter-patters down outside over the txosna.

Conversely, when someone admits to a shortcoming, a fault or a foible, or has perhaps failed to make the grade in some way, they might use the same concept in mock self-deprecation:

I’ve been there, done that, and got the txapela beret.

“Well, yes, I’m from Bilbao, but not from the centre.”

In fact, I’m more from Bilbao than you are.

Talking of convalescing in hospital, the story goes that a man was found in the wreckage of the Twin Towers.

Try this one on for size - I am so from Bilbao, so from Bilbao am I, that I even decided to be born just wherever I chose, and I chose a sleepy little market town in Ireland.

Half-conscious, he told the paramedics he was fine.

Not only that, either – many years ago I had a total cardio-respiratory failure here, dead in the water I was, and they had to break two of my ribs and jump-start me with electrodes.

“Just a few scratches”, he croaked, and added “I’m from Bilbao”, whereupon he fainted away again.

Born in Ireland, and reborn in Bilbao. So I’ve lived in Bilbao and I’ve even died in Bilbao as well, and I’m still living in Bilbao to this very day. I’m from Bilbao, get it?

Scratches, right.

I fear no man, and very few women. Beat that bilbainada.”

His scratches were both legs broken in four or five places each, plus an arm, pelvis and three ribs, and he had a collapsed lung too.

Something to cheer us all

He also had some mysterious lacerations on his forearms and chest that the doctors couldn’t explain, because they didn’t square with the injuries he might have been expected to sustain in that scenario.

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The Feds were waiting to interview him because nobody could account for him anywhere either, and the doctors called them in about half an hour after he came round a day or two later.

And a bit of History to lift the spirit:

“So which of the towers were you in, sir?”, they asked,

Mar 23

“North or South?”

March, the third month of the year, is derived from Mars via the Roman month Martius, which was considered a lucky time to go to war. According to the story of the founding of Rome, Mars was the father of Romulus and Remus, twin boys born to a human priestess and raised by a wolf. Romulus later founded the city of Rome, and the Romans believed that Romulus's divine father would come to their aid in times of crisis or disaster. Let's hope that "Mars", divine protector of the city of Rome, protect us in this "battle" and lead us to victory. I'm sure there are a bit of Mars in every Italian and in all of us, in every nation…

“Towers?” he says,

We will win this war!

“Towers?

Blast from the past

The last thing I remember is keeling over in the aisle after some son of a bitch stabbed me four or five times with what looked like a Stanley knife when I tried to stop him and his mates hijacking our plane.

Monday 23 March

What towers?

I get cross, then sad, and finally end up turning my heart inside out, the bad part on the outside and the good part on the inside, and keep trying to find a way to become what I’d like to be and what I could be if … if only there were no other people in the world. …

What IS all this stuff about towers?”

No, no, it’s not how I’m feeling at the moment in Bilbao. It’s how someone else was feeling, cooped up in a confined space in much more dangerous circumstances. The last words Anne Frank ever wrote in her diary, on 1 August 1944. Three days later the SS arrived and took them all away.

Sometimes you have to earn it.

A few years ago I used “The Diary of a Young Girl” for occasional English classes. A poignant, fascinating read, considering everything that was going on around her. Sometimes mistakenly portrayed, though, as a detached, nondescript, simple diary written by a young German Jewess hiding out from the Nazis in Amsterdam. But, after hearing a speech by the Dutch government in exile in which they claimed that after the war they would be compiling testimony of the whole thing for publication, Anne started to polish her writings up a little more, and that’s why she delves into life, family, friendship, love and all the rest in such a curious way, although she was only in her early teens. So she was interested in publication, but could never have anticipated the global fame she eventually garnered. I thoroughly recommend it. But you read it with no mystery in your mind, no wondering how it’s all going to turn out in the end for poor lovesick Anne, Peter and the rest. Unlike an Agatha Christie novel, when you have to wait until the end to find out whodunnit:

Back to the first sentence of this - on that particular day I had run into a couple of chaps in the street, only one of whom I knew.

[My apologies to those who’ve read the following story before on ProZ, but I’ve stuff to do and can’t be making up new nonsense all day long for this. I’m more than a little down today – but not out – in the knowledge that Spain’s lockdown has been extended to 11 April. At least. We knew it was on the cards, but now it’s official. Reading this again cheered me up, so I hope you enjoy either your first read or your re-read …]

There’d been no introductions, but we’d been talking for a while, and then the one I didn’t know asked me where I was from.

Hercule Poirot was addressing the six suspects in the drawing room at Highfield Towers, residence of the late Dr Black, the renowned wealthy scientist who had been brutally done to death during our stay there, necessarily by one of those present in that very room.

Must have been something I said, or the way I said it.

There was Colonel Mustard, the gnarled, grizzled old soldier who had fought his way intrepidly through Omdurman, both Boer Wars, the trenches of the Somme amid gas, mud and endless salvos of bullets and shells, and three marriages. Now retired, with one arm shot away, he had swapped battle for bottle, and spent his time weaving unsteadily around on a self-appointed mission to protect pretty young things from the cads, blackguards, ne’er-do-wells and good-for-nothing workshy loafers and predators who littered beaches from Deauville to Estoril and Calais to St Tropez. When none of these wretched vultures were pestering the ladies, he would simply be on hand to keep the flies off the creamy white flesh of their luscious sweat-beaded melons. And their tempting pink cherries. To say nothing of their moist downy peaches.

I speak the language pretty fluently, but occasionally something gives you away, plus I don’t look very Basque because I have fairer hair and I don’t have their aquiline nose and sharp features, although people don’t always assume you aren’t Spanish-speaking.

Beside him was Professor Plum, another scientist who had been working alongside Black on an ambitious new project they were both extremely excited about – an idea they were going to call the “worldwide web”, which would apparently use new-fangled machines to provide everyone everywhere with information at the same time, and even a letter system they were going to call “e-mail”. A paperless system, too, whatever that meant. I avow it sounded like a downright hare-brained scheme to me. Absolutely ludicrous – whoever heard of a paperless letter?

Sometimes, when it comes out, they say afterwards they just thought at first I was from another part of the State.

Dash it all, we have a perfectly satisfactory postal system in this country, with at least three or four collections and deliveries a day, for heaven’s sake. If I write a note for my man Bloggs to be delivered to someone in the morning, why, it inevitably gets there in time for afternoon tea and crustless cucumber sandwiches. The whole rigmarole was doomed to failure from the word go, if you want my opinion. Preposterous. It would never catch on.

“Bilbao,” I told him breezily. “I’m from Bilbao.”

Sitting stiffly upright in her chair, her little rat’s eyes darting suspiciously everywhere, was the third suspect, a woman by the name of Peacock, Dr Black’s housekeeper, a sharp-tongued, bitter, jealous female, permanently enraged with the hand Life had dealt her. For time had passed Prudence Peacock by - now in her late fifties, she had waited all her life in service at Highfield for Mr Right, before she was eventually forced to set her sights on the only one who was left - the occupant of Highfield, Dr Black himself, an eternal bachelor. But, sadly, it was not to be. The staid, dowdy Prudence might have held the keys to his house for years, but not the keys to his heart …

The bloke I knew raised his eyebrows.

Unlike Rosie White, the murdered man’s cook, no more than a frazzled East End commoner who dropped her aitches and used frightfully vulgar expressions such as “Lor’-love-a-duck”, “Strike a light, guv’” and “Gor blimey, missus” but, as everyone knows, the way to a mere man’s affections is through his stomach, and Rosie was renowned, revered and envied for miles around for her legendary solid fare of shepherd’s pie, tripe and onions, Welsh rarebit, toad-in-the-hole and slow-roasted lamb, among other specialities. She, too, had entertained high hopes at one time with Dr Black, but given her lowly origins and lack of finesse she had sadly realised she could not hope to set her cap at him in any official capacity. She was nevertheless well aware of the prim and proper Prudence’s aspirations, and hated her for it (the feeling was mutual), and her way of foiling them was to place a delicious steaming hotpot, for example, in front of Dr Black and beam in triumph as he tucked in enthusiastically amid oohs and aahs and mmms, while the housekeeper fumed in a barely contained stony silence only yards away.

“Eh, what, you, from Bilbao?”

Smirking insolently at all those gathered there was Letitia Scarlett, a penniless flame-haired tearaway with dangerous curves who latched onto other people’s money to smoke gaspers, swill whisky and flirt with anything in trousers, particularly trousers with bottomless pockets, and, as Rosie White, who was by way of being a bit of a Keyhole Kate tale-bearer, put it to me rather coarsely, she was not averse to a “piece of skirt” either, dear me. Professor Plum had also confided to me that, although Black’s bloodshot eyes would linger longer than was strictly necessary or decorous on Miss Scarlett’s trim figure on occasion, the owner of Highfield Towers was no fool and knew she was a gold-digger, and had told her so in no uncertain terms, much to her chagrin and disgust, and in any case at the end of the day he was more captivated by Rosie White’s legs of pork and sides of beef than by Letitia Scarlett’s best rump.

He turned to the other one.

I disclosed to Poirot that the Reverend Green, a small round piggy-looking man, had ended up in this remote neck of the woods because the Church had quietly dispatched him from the capital following allegations that he had plied altar boys with communion wine at catechism classes. The tattling masses also assured the boys had been subjected to, shall we say, certain acts unbecoming to a man of the cloth. And that was not all. Here too, the gossipy cook had informed Poirot of rumours concerning the saintly Reverend during choir practice with young lads in Highfield village, in the hoarse whisper of the great unwashed: “More queer practice than choir practice if you arsk me, Mr Parrot sir, or my name ain’t Rosie White. Gawd strike me down dead if it weren’t.”

“No, he isn’t,” he told him.

Yes, Poirot was working the room ...

“I’ve known this guy for years.

“Mesdames et Messieurs, this has been one of my most difficult cases. I smelt a rat. Or rather, something smelt fishy to me. The whole thing smacked of a red herring. Many red herring, in fact. More red herring than one would find in the hold of a trawler putting in at Grimsby, as Inspector Japp said to me this very morning when we were winding up the case."

He’s Irish.

“They don’t catch red herring”, drawled Miss Scarlett, lolling against the fireplace with a bored defiant expression.

He’s a translator.”

Poirot turned his egg-shaped head to look at her.

His friend laughed.

“So you wouldn’t find any in a trawler. What you mean is a kipper, and they’re smoked”, Letitia went on, taking a long drag from her cigarette as if to illustrate the verb, and carelessly tapping her ash onto the Persian rug. “The expression “red herring” comes from when they were training hounds to run after the fox. What they did was to …"

“Better leave being from Bilbao to the bilbaínos.

Poirot rapped his cane on the floor for attention.

It’s a Bilbao thing.

“Thank you, Mademoiselle, thank you indeed for your kind enlightenment, but what I meant was that there were far too many incriminating clues pointing to far too many suspects. There was either a clue found at the scene of the crime, or something to provide motive. Could either Letitia Scarlett or Prudence Peacock have become so enraged with unrequited affection and rebuttals that they took it upon themselves to commit murder?

You wouldn’t understand. Not being from Bilbao, I mean.”

Unlikely, and anyway by their separate accounts they were together at the time of the murder, when Prudence was berating Miss Scarlett in the lounge for her outrageous behaviour and blatant flirting with Dr Black and others in the house, whereupon the young lady merely shrieked with laughter and poured herself another double of The Famous Grouse, and so her pink garter found at the scene had obviously been deliberately planted there to incriminate her. And why on earth would Rosie White do away with the man who was her bread and butter?

Naturally I couldn’t let him get away with that. I shrugged at this chap:

The sheer violence of the crime in any case pointed to a man. Also, the lavatory close to the scene was heard to flush from the lounge shortly before the dastardly deed was discovered, but there was something about that lavatory which signalled a man to me when I inspected it. And then it came to me. The seat had been left in the upright position and, as everyone knows, very few women are physically capable of leaving a lavatory seat up.”

“I understand perfectly. Me?

Poirot was warming to his task.

Not from Bilbao, me?

“Discarding the women, then, we now know Colonel Mustard despised Dr Black as a filthy unpatriotic coward who had deliberately used the feeble excuse of his important research to avoid being sent to the front at Ypres and being cut to pieces like everyone else at the whim of Kitchener and the rest of the top brass. Again, however, it is hardly a reason for murdering the man, and anyway the good Colonel, I am afraid, is rather the worse for wear for much of the time, and I do not believe he could either properly plan or execute such a crime.”

You don’t know who you’re talking to here. I most certainly am from Bilbao.

Mustard glared at him, harrumphed a little and twisted furiously at his handlebar moustache with his only hand, but otherwise said nothing.

I’ve strutted all the Bilbao stuff. My spoken Basque might be a little rusty now because I haven’t been practising it for years, but then a lot of people here don’t speak a word of it.

“Could Professor Plum have become so incensed with Black taking out a patent for his new system without including him, as it has transpired, that he decided to take revenge?”, Poirot went on. “But he, too, had an alibi – the cook was ordered to bring the grilled trotters to his room that evening, and lock the door behind her until the following morning, as he wanted no interruptions from anyone and was not prepared to leave his desk before he had finished that day’s research. Which she did.

I’ve sipped the txakolina, I’ve eaten the txistorra and the txuleta, and I’ve listened to the txalaparta in the txoko while the txirimiri pitter-patters down outside over the txosna.

“Perhaps”, ventured the detective, “the doctor had threatened Green with disclosing his shenanigans, and the desperate Reverend had to act fast?

I’ve been there, done that, and got the txapela beret.

After all, a catechism was found torn into pieces in a wastepaper basket down the hall. Perhaps, but ironically it transpires that at the time he was closeted in the vestry with two choirboys, giving them extra Bible classes. It sounds … plausible enough.”

In fact, I’m more from Bilbao than you are.

The Reverend Green’s face turned a delicate shade of pink as all those assembled in the room fixed him with a disapproving stare.

Try this one on for size - I am so from Bilbao, so from Bilbao am I, that I even decided to be born just wherever I chose, and I chose a sleepy little market town in Ireland.

Poirot raised his hands in the air.

Not only that, either – many years ago I had a total cardio-respiratory failure here, dead in the water I was, and they had to break two of my ribs and jump-start me with electrodes.

“Truly, ladies and gentlemen, I believed I was going mad. There seemed to be no way that anyone could have killed the doctor. “Nom d’un chien, Hercule!”, I thought to myself. Yes, yes, I did. And then I said, “Nom d’un nom!” Followed by "Nom d’une pipe!” And then “Nom d’un nom d’un nom d’un nom” …

Born in Ireland, and reborn in Bilbao. So I’ve lived in Bilbao and I’ve even died in Bilbao as well, and I’m still living in Bilbao to this very day. I’m from Bilbao, get it?

“I say, can we get on with this without all the foreign shilly-shallying?” broke in Colonel Mustard, still irritated by Poirot’s previous remark. He swayed as he got up to pour himself another brandy and soda. “I have to catch the 6.27 to Paddington to get to my club, and I’ll have you know my driver and my man can't wait around all day doing nothing and getting paid for it, by Jove. It’s a dashed liberty, law-abiding British citizens being retained and insulted like this by an uppity French detective.”

I fear no man, and very few women. Beat that bilbainada.”

For once, Poirot ignored the slight on his nationality.

Something to cheer us all

“What I mean, Mesdames et Messieurs, is that all the information I was receiving was bogus, none of the clues led anywhere at all, or else everyone had an alibi, and at every turn I was foiled. They could not ALL have done it together, as they did on the Orient Express, I told myself.”

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Then Poirot’s expression changed to a sly leer. He was at his most catlike, his green eyes shining, positively purring as he spoke:

And a bit of History to lift the spirit:

“I reached the conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, that there was no logical reason for the murder of Dr Black. It was a totally random act, committed not for money, not for love, not out of hatred, not to take revenge on the doctor, not to silence him … non, non, this man was murdered simply because of the totally unrelated rage of a person belittled, denigrated and defeated. Dr Black was not killed by Miss Scarlett, or by Rosie White, or by Prudence Peacock, or by the Reverend Green, or by Colonel Mustard, nor, curiously, was he killed by Professor Plum either. It all became clear when I thought back to one of my previous cases, the murder of poor Roger Aykroyd.”

Mar 23

I watched in suspense as his voice grew harsher.

March, the third month of the year, is derived from Mars via the Roman month Martius, which was considered a lucky time to go to war. According to the story of the founding of Rome, Mars was the father of Romulus and Remus, twin boys born to a human priestess and raised by a wolf. Romulus later founded the city of Rome, and the Romans believed that Romulus's divine father would come to their aid in times of crisis or disaster. Let's hope that "Mars", divine protector of the city of Rome, protect us in this "battle" and lead us to victory. I'm sure there are a bit of Mars in every Italian and in all of us, in every nation…

“I am now in a position to reveal the truth. To my great dismay, the perpetrator of this foul act was a person no one would ever have suspected. None other than my own companion, in fact. Yes, Dr Black was murdered by Captain Hastings. In the library. With the lead piping.”

We will win this war!

The game was up. I sprang to my feet.

Blast from the past

“Yes!

Monday 23 March

Yes, I admit it!

I get cross, then sad, and finally end up turning my heart inside out, the bad part on the outside and the good part on the inside, and keep trying to find a way to become what I’d like to be and what I could be if … if only there were no other people in the world. …

It was me, damn your eyes!

No, no, it’s not how I’m feeling at the moment in Bilbao. It’s how someone else was feeling, cooped up in a confined space in much more dangerous circumstances. The last words Anne Frank ever wrote in her diary, on 1 August 1944. Three days later the SS arrived and took them all away.

I killed Black, yes, I did it all right!

A few years ago I used “The Diary of a Young Girl” for occasional English classes. A poignant, fascinating read, considering everything that was going on around her. Sometimes mistakenly portrayed, though, as a detached, nondescript, simple diary written by a young German Jewess hiding out from the Nazis in Amsterdam. But, after hearing a speech by the Dutch government in exile in which they claimed that after the war they would be compiling testimony of the whole thing for publication, Anne started to polish her writings up a little more, and that’s why she delves into life, family, friendship, love and all the rest in such a curious way, although she was only in her early teens. So she was interested in publication, but could never have anticipated the global fame she eventually garnered. I thoroughly recommend it. But you read it with no mystery in your mind, no wondering how it’s all going to turn out in the end for poor lovesick Anne, Peter and the rest. Unlike an Agatha Christie novel, when you have to wait until the end to find out whodunnit:

I belted him with that piping good and proper. And yes, for no reason whatsoever, just to commit the perfect murder and see you fail, Poirot. To watch you squirm, eat humble pie and bite the dust at long last among all the alibis and false clues I planted, you little Belgian monster. Damn you, Poirot. Damn you to hell, you cursed mountebank!”

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Yes, it was true. I had grown to abhor that foreign Johnny so much down through the years. What with me doing all the legwork and him just sitting there with his fingers pressed to his temples, banging on about the grey cells, Hastings, the grey cells, and that irritating habit of his of suddenly dashing off to clinch the case all on his own, grabbing all the glory for himself, and telling ME diddly squat until it was all over. Oh certainly, I loathed the arrogant little sod, I can tell you.

Hercule Poirot was addressing the six suspects in the drawing room at Highfield Towers, residence of the late Dr Black, the renowned wealthy scientist who had been brutally done to death during our stay there, necessarily by one of those present in that very room.

And so I yearned to take the pint-sized pillock down a peg or two. I had to fairly stick my fist in my mouth to stifle the laughter when Mustard called him French just now. Dear God, the way he reacted to that kind of thing!

There was Colonel Mustard, the gnarled, grizzled old soldier who had fought his way intrepidly through Omdurman, both Boer Wars, the trenches of the Somme amid gas, mud and endless salvos of bullets and shells, and three marriages. Now retired, with one arm shot away, he had swapped battle for bottle, and spent his time weaving unsteadily around on a self-appointed mission to protect pretty young things from the cads, blackguards, ne’er-do-wells and good-for-nothing workshy loafers and predators who littered beaches from Deauville to Estoril and Calais to St Tropez. When none of these wretched vultures were pestering the ladies, he would simply be on hand to keep the flies off the creamy white flesh of their luscious sweat-beaded melons. And their tempting pink cherries. To say nothing of their moist downy peaches.

Lord, how I roared inside when somebody took him for a Frog. How the little runt would bristle. How his hackles would rise. He would go red in the face and a vein would start pulsating on that blessed egg head of his. Sometimes I even propitiated it myself, just for fun. “M. Poirot wishes to ask you a few questions”, I would say to people, “ … er, by the way, do you speak French at all?” And then of course they’d assume he was French, and walk in and maybe ask him what part of France he was from, and then the fun would start. He would draw himself up to his full height of four foot three, and splutter:

Beside him was Professor Plum, another scientist who had been working alongside Black on an ambitious new project they were both extremely excited about – an idea they were going to call the “worldwide web”, which would apparently use new-fangled machines to provide everyone everywhere with information at the same time, and even a letter system they were going to call “e-mail”. A paperless system, too, whatever that meant. I avow it sounded like a downright hare-brained scheme to me. Absolutely ludicrous – whoever heard of a paperless letter?

“I am not French, Madame, I am Belgian. Like Hergé. Georges Simenon. And Jacques Brel, to name but a few.”

Dash it all, we have a perfectly satisfactory postal system in this country, with at least three or four collections and deliveries a day, for heaven’s sake. If I write a note for my man Bloggs to be delivered to someone in the morning, why, it inevitably gets there in time for afternoon tea and crustless cucumber sandwiches. The whole rigmarole was doomed to failure from the word go, if you want my opinion. Preposterous. It would never catch on.

The old fool. Brel isn't even born, and nobody’s heard of the first two yet.

Sitting stiffly upright in her chair, her little rat’s eyes darting suspiciously everywhere, was the third suspect, a woman by the name of Peacock, Dr Black’s housekeeper, a sharp-tongued, bitter, jealous female, permanently enraged with the hand Life had dealt her. For time had passed Prudence Peacock by - now in her late fifties, she had waited all her life in service at Highfield for Mr Right, before she was eventually forced to set her sights on the only one who was left - the occupant of Highfield, Dr Black himself, an eternal bachelor. But, sadly, it was not to be. The staid, dowdy Prudence might have held the keys to his house for years, but not the keys to his heart …

And as for all that poncing around with the waxed moustache, the tiny Russian cigarettes … and oh, those ruddy syrups of his. Give me strength. I took him down to the Goose and Gander one day for a snifter. I ordered a brandy, naturally, but Poirot just had to ask if they had any “sirop”, didn’t he?

Unlike Rosie White, the murdered man’s cook, no more than a frazzled East End commoner who dropped her aitches and used frightfully vulgar expressions such as “Lor’-love-a-duck”, “Strike a light, guv’” and “Gor blimey, missus” but, as everyone knows, the way to a mere man’s affections is through his stomach, and Rosie was renowned, revered and envied for miles around for her legendary solid fare of shepherd’s pie, tripe and onions, Welsh rarebit, toad-in-the-hole and slow-roasted lamb, among other specialities. She, too, had entertained high hopes at one time with Dr Black, but given her lowly origins and lack of finesse she had sadly realised she could not hope to set her cap at him in any official capacity. She was nevertheless well aware of the prim and proper Prudence’s aspirations, and hated her for it (the feeling was mutual), and her way of foiling them was to place a delicious steaming hotpot, for example, in front of Dr Black and beam in triumph as he tucked in enthusiastically amid oohs and aahs and mmms, while the housekeeper fumed in a barely contained stony silence only yards away.

John the publican being a simple man, he went out to the kitchen and came back with a tin of Lyle’s Golden Syrup, a spoon and a little bowl. Poirot’s face was a picture.

Smirking insolently at all those gathered there was Letitia Scarlett, a penniless flame-haired tearaway with dangerous curves who latched onto other people’s money to smoke gaspers, swill whisky and flirt with anything in trousers, particularly trousers with bottomless pockets, and, as Rosie White, who was by way of being a bit of a Keyhole Kate tale-bearer, put it to me rather coarsely, she was not averse to a “piece of skirt” either, dear me. Professor Plum had also confided to me that, although Black’s bloodshot eyes would linger longer than was strictly necessary or decorous on Miss Scarlett’s trim figure on occasion, the owner of Highfield Towers was no fool and knew she was a gold-digger, and had told her so in no uncertain terms, much to her chagrin and disgust, and in any case at the end of the day he was more captivated by Rosie White’s legs of pork and sides of beef than by Letitia Scarlett’s best rump.

And the patent leather shoes. Oh, don’t get me started on the patent leather. All the fussing and whining if he got so much as a speck of dirt or dust on them. As we were leaving the public house that day I just managed to avoid some horrid smelly dog’s mess at the bottom of the steps, but cunningly said nothing to the little Belgian following me out. Not only did he step in it, he stepped in it with both shoes, and so there had to be a great to-do and palaver of washing and drying and brushing and preening with his man Georges later. Laugh?

I disclosed to Poirot that the Reverend Green, a small round piggy-looking man, had ended up in this remote neck of the woods because the Church had quietly dispatched him from the capital following allegations that he had plied altar boys with communion wine at catechism classes. The tattling masses also assured the boys had been subjected to, shall we say, certain acts unbecoming to a man of the cloth. And that was not all. Here too, the gossipy cook had informed Poirot of rumours concerning the saintly Reverend during choir practice with young lads in Highfield village, in the hoarse whisper of the great unwashed: “More queer practice than choir practice if you arsk me, Mr Parrot sir, or my name ain’t Rosie White. Gawd strike me down dead if it weren’t.”

Laugh?

Yes, Poirot was working the room ...

I’ll say I laughed all right – dear God, I thought my plus-fours would never dry.

“Mesdames et Messieurs, this has been one of my most difficult cases. I smelt a rat. Or rather, something smelt fishy to me. The whole thing smacked of a red herring. Many red herring, in fact. More red herring than one would find in the hold of a trawler putting in at Grimsby, as Inspector Japp said to me this very morning when we were winding up the case."

As if on cue, Inspector Japp entered the room with two officers.

“They don’t catch red herring”, drawled Miss Scarlett, lolling against the fireplace with a bored defiant expression.

“Got to come with us, I’m afraid, Captain Hastings”, he announced gravely.

Poirot turned his egg-shaped head to look at her.

And I was led away in cuffs, a broken man, to my date with the judge and the hangman. …

“So you wouldn’t find any in a trawler. What you mean is a kipper, and they’re smoked”, Letitia went on, taking a long drag from her cigarette as if to illustrate the verb, and carelessly tapping her ash onto the Persian rug. “The expression “red herring” comes from when they were training hounds to run after the fox. What they did was to …"

P.L.F.Persio

Poirot rapped his cane on the floor for attention.

Member (2010)

“Thank you, Mademoiselle, thank you indeed for your kind enlightenment, but what I meant was that there were far too many incriminating clues pointing to far too many suspects. There was either a clue found at the scene of the crime, or something to provide motive. Could either Letitia Scarlett or Prudence Peacock have become so enraged with unrequited affection and rebuttals that they took it upon themselves to commit murder?

Proper lush

Unlikely, and anyway by their separate accounts they were together at the time of the murder, when Prudence was berating Miss Scarlett in the lounge for her outrageous behaviour and blatant flirting with Dr Black and others in the house, whereupon the young lady merely shrieked with laughter and poured herself another double of The Famous Grouse, and so her pink garter found at the scene had obviously been deliberately planted there to incriminate her. And why on earth would Rosie White do away with the man who was her bread and butter?

Thank you so much, Mervyn, what a great read!

The sheer violence of the crime in any case pointed to a man. Also, the lavatory close to the scene was heard to flush from the lounge shortly before the dastardly deed was discovered, but there was something about that lavatory which signalled a man to me when I inspected it. And then it came to me. The seat had been left in the upright position and, as everyone knows, very few women are physically capable of leaving a lavatory seat up.”

Dear Kitty

Poirot was warming to his task.

Diary of Anne Frank, brilliant book, read it years ago. I would recommend for another inspirational read "Papillon", never mind the Steve Mcqueen film, I especially liked the shark stories, the time he opened up a restaurant, the leper colony, the prison cells near the beach that would fill with water when the tide came in.

“Discarding the women, then, we now know Colonel Mustard despised Dr Black as a filthy unpatriotic coward who had deliberately used the feeble excuse of his important research to avoid being sent to the front at Ypres and being cut to pieces like everyone else at the whim of Kitchener and the rest of the top brass. Again, however, it is hardly a reason for murdering the man, and anyway the good Colonel, I am afraid, is rather the worse for wear for much of the time, and I do not believe he could either properly plan or execute such a crime.”

Truly a story of a man who could face it all, and still come out smiling.

Mustard glared at him, harrumphed a little and twisted furiously at his handlebar moustache with his only hand, but otherwise said nothing.

What a guy!

“Could Professor Plum have become so incensed with Black taking out a patent for his new system without including him, as it has transpired, that he decided to take revenge?”, Poirot went on. “But he, too, had an alibi – the cook was ordered to bring the grilled trotters to his room that evening, and lock the door behind her until the following morning, as he wanted no interruptions from anyone and was not prepared to leave his desk before he had finished that day’s research. Which she did.

Stay strong everybody, and keep the faith, some guy in the south of France is close to a cure.

“Perhaps”, ventured the detective, “the doctor had threatened Green with disclosing his shenanigans, and the desperate Reverend had to act fast?

Oh and Harvey Wienstien tested positive, so not all bad news.

After all, a catechism was found torn into pieces in a wastepaper basket down the hall. Perhaps, but ironically it transpires that at the time he was closeted in the vestry with two choirboys, giving them extra Bible classes. It sounds … plausible enough.”

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page8.html

The Reverend Green’s face turned a delicate shade of pink as all those assembled in the room fixed him with a disapproving stare.

Robert Rietvelt

Poirot raised his hands in the air.

Local time: 21:42

“Truly, ladies and gentlemen, I believed I was going mad. There seemed to be no way that anyone could have killed the doctor. “Nom d’un chien, Hercule!”, I thought to myself. Yes, yes, I did. And then I said, “Nom d’un nom!” Followed by "Nom d’une pipe!” And then “Nom d’un nom d’un nom d’un nom” …

Spanish to Dutch

“I say, can we get on with this without all the foreign shilly-shallying?” broke in Colonel Mustard, still irritated by Poirot’s previous remark. He swayed as he got up to pour himself another brandy and soda. “I have to catch the 6.27 to Paddington to get to my club, and I’ll have you know my driver and my man can't wait around all day doing nothing and getting paid for it, by Jove. It’s a dashed liberty, law-abiding British citizens being retained and insulted like this by an uppity French detective.”

This is wrong

For once, Poirot ignored the slight on his nationality.

Brian Joyce wrote:

“What I mean, Mesdames et Messieurs, is that all the information I was receiving was bogus, none of the clues led anywhere at all, or else everyone had an alibi, and at every turn I was foiled. They could not ALL have done it together, as they did on the Orient Express, I told myself.”

That makes you happy?

Then Poirot’s expression changed to a sly leer. He was at his most catlike, his green eyes shining, positively purring as he spoke:

You don't wish anybody an illness or worse, even not a rat as Weinstien, then you are no better than him. Sorry, but in my book it is simply not done.

“I reached the conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, that there was no logical reason for the murder of Dr Black. It was a totally random act, committed not for money, not for love, not out of hatred, not to take revenge on the doctor, not to silence him … non, non, this man was murdered simply because of the totally unrelated rage of a person belittled, denigrated and defeated. Dr Black was not killed by Miss Scarlett, or by Rosie White, or by Prudence Peacock, or by the Reverend Green, or by Colonel Mustard, nor, curiously, was he killed by Professor Plum either. It all became clear when I thought back to one of my previous cases, the murder of poor Roger Aykroyd.”

Stay healthy everybody.

I watched in suspense as his voice grew harsher.

I cannot believe...

“I am now in a position to reveal the truth. To my great dismay, the perpetrator of this foul act was a person no one would ever have suspected. None other than my own companion, in fact. Yes, Dr Black was murdered by Captain Hastings. In the library. With the lead piping.”

Bad terrible sentence. You do not realise what this plague is. No you surely dont.

The game was up. I sprang to my feet.

Tom in London

“Yes!

Local time: 20:42

Yes, I admit it!

Member (2008)

It was me, damn your eyes!

agree with Angie

I killed Black, yes, I did it all right!

I agree but given the genesis (origin) of this thread, it will inevitably attract flippant remarks from superficial people. As I write I have a dear friend suffering with a high fever, muscular pains, and enormous fatigue, who says she is very frightened.

I belted him with that piping good and proper. And yes, for no reason whatsoever, just to commit the perfect murder and see you fail, Poirot. To watch you squirm, eat humble pie and bite the dust at long last among all the alibis and false clues I planted, you little Belgian monster. Damn you, Poirot. Damn you to hell, you cursed mountebank!”

No doubt someone, seeing it's me making this post, will make a frivolous comment which I'm sure will be very amusing.

Yes, it was true. I had grown to abhor that foreign Johnny so much down through the years. What with me doing all the legwork and him just sitting there with his fingers pressed to his temples, banging on about the grey cells, Hastings, the grey cells, and that irritating habit of his of suddenly dashing off to clinch the case all on his own, grabbing all the glory for himself, and telling ME diddly squat until it was all over. Oh certainly, I loathed the arrogant little sod, I can tell you.

@Tom Mar 23

And so I yearned to take the pint-sized pillock down a peg or two. I had to fairly stick my fist in my mouth to stifle the laughter when Mustard called him French just now. Dear God, the way he reacted to that kind of thing!

Tom in London wrote:

Lord, how I roared inside when somebody took him for a Frog. How the little runt would bristle. How his hackles would rise. He would go red in the face and a vein would start pulsating on that blessed egg head of his. Sometimes I even propitiated it myself, just for fun. “M. Poirot wishes to ask you a few questions”, I would say to people, “ … er, by the way, do you speak French at all?” And then of course they’d assume he was French, and walk in and maybe ask him what part of France he was from, and then the fun would start. He would draw himself up to his full height of four foot three, and splutter:

As I write I have a dear friend suffering with a high fever, muscular pains, and enormous fatigue, who says she is very frightened.

“I am not French, Madame, I am Belgian. Like Hergé. Georges Simenon. And Jacques Brel, to name but a few.”

I just learned that friend aged 61 with no other illness, was hospitalized last Friday and died last night, so nothing is amusing here. NO

The old fool. Brel isn't even born, and nobody’s heard of the first two yet.

I'm so sorry to hear

And as for all that poncing around with the waxed moustache, the tiny Russian cigarettes … and oh, those ruddy syrups of his. Give me strength. I took him down to the Goose and Gander one day for a snifter. I ordered a brandy, naturally, but Poirot just had to ask if they had any “sirop”, didn’t he?

My most sincere condolences!

John the publican being a simple man, he went out to the kitchen and came back with a tin of Lyle’s Golden Syrup, a spoon and a little bowl. Poirot’s face was a picture.

A long and tight hug!

And the patent leather shoes. Oh, don’t get me started on the patent leather. All the fussing and whining if he got so much as a speck of dirt or dust on them. As we were leaving the public house that day I just managed to avoid some horrid smelly dog’s mess at the bottom of the steps, but cunningly said nothing to the little Belgian following me out. Not only did he step in it, he stepped in it with both shoes, and so there had to be a great to-do and palaver of washing and drying and brushing and preening with his man Georges later. Laugh?

To you and your dear friend:

Laugh?

My best wishes for a fast and full recovery!

I’ll say I laughed all right – dear God, I thought my plus-fours would never dry.

Sorry ...

As if on cue, Inspector Japp entered the room with two officers.

... to hear all this from both of you.

“Got to come with us, I’m afraid, Captain Hastings”, he announced gravely.

Just got an e-mail from the administrator saying the virus has been detected in someone in this block. The neighbour is in hospital and is fine. I don't know who it is. Only who it isn't.

And I was led away in cuffs, a broken man, to my date with the judge and the hangman. …

Anyway, they've already splashed a load of extra disinfectant around the common passageways, but we have to ramp up on our own internal disinfection, handwashing, precautions etc. Buggeration.

P.L.F.Persio

"If your going through hell, keep going" Winston Churchill

Member (2010)

People!!

Proper lush

We cannot all afford to fall into weeping and wailing over every piece of bad news in this crisis. If I'm going to survive this I'm gonna have to put my "man pants" on, because if the virus doesn't get me, the food shortages just might. Seeing humour in the blackness is a well known defense mechanism, and I need all the help I can get. I don't expect many people to crying into their face masks at my funeral, but that's O.K. It is often said that good people don't win wars

Man pants ...

Thank you so much, Mervyn, what a great read!

So you have woman pants on at the minute, then?

Dear Kitty

Or you simply aren't wearing pants?

Diary of Anne Frank, brilliant book, read it years ago. I would recommend for another inspirational read "Papillon", never mind the Steve Mcqueen film, I especially liked the shark stories, the time he opened up a restaurant, the leper colony, the prison cells near the beach that would fill with water when the tide came in.

... and woman moans

Truly a story of a man who could face it all, and still come out smiling.

Don't even know why I bothered posting these replies, so I'm changing this.

What a guy!

They acted fast and wisely

Stay strong everybody, and keep the faith, some guy in the south of France is close to a cure.

If they have already sprayed disinfectant in the common areas of your block, they acted fast and wisely. Please take care there!

Oh and Harvey Wienstien tested positive, so not all bad news.

Closer Mar 23

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page8.html

It's getting closer and eerier all the time!

Robert Rietvelt

I had to send a certified letter this morning (no, it wasn't a Get Well Soon card for old Harvey Babebanger), and went to Bilbao's Central Post Office, only 5 minutes from here. The queue, with 1.5 metres between each person, stretched right around the corner for about 20 metres.

Local time: 21:42

Gotta go. 4K to take care of, plus the 8 pm balcony applause draws near ...

Spanish to Dutch

Local time: 15:42

This is wrong

Direct financial support for solo freelancers in Germany

Brian Joyce wrote:

The German government has just published an outline description of the financial support it's proposing for solo freelancers and other self-employed, and micro-businesses, in Germany. The one-page file they've sent to the Federal Council (the upper house) for approval is available here (in German):

That makes you happy?

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You don't wish anybody an illness or worse, even not a rat as Weinstien, then you are no better than him. Sorry, but in my book it is simply not done.

Basicall... See more

Stay healthy everybody.

New stricter measures for the UK

I cannot believe...

We had an announcement from the PM this evening saying that people were allowed out only for essential shopping trips, one outing per day for exercise, etc. I was shocked to see video footage of crowded London Underground carriages this morning.

Bad terrible sentence. You do not realise what this plague is. No you surely dont.

Not sure if we can walk the dogs more than once a day.

Tom in London

Have ordered some scissors to cut our hair, as the hairdresser will no doubt be closed.

Local time: 20:42

Say it ain't so, Bo

Member (2008)

News of the "essential shopping trips and one outing per day" restrictions must come as such a relief to the worried population of the UK.

agree with Angie

A population of, what, some 60 million?

All safe. Just as long as nobody among the 60 million cheats on it.

I agree but given the genesis (origin) of this thread, it will inevitably attract flippant remarks from superficial people. As I write I have a dear friend suffering with a high fever, muscular pains, and enormous fatigue, who says she is very frightened.

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Maybe somebody should ask Boris what, exactly, is "an outing"?

How far does it go?

@Tom Mar 23

How long does it last?

Tom in London wrote:

How many people does it involve?

As I write I have a dear friend suffering with a high fever, muscular pains, and enormous fatigue, who says she is very frightened.

What does "essential" mean?

I just learned that friend aged 61 with no other illness, was hospitalized last Friday and died last night, so nothing is amusing here. NO

I'm so sorry to hear

etc. etc. etc.

My most sincere condolences!

What has to happen for the Cuddly Clown to get his arse in gear?

A long and tight hug!

Local time: 15:46

To you and your dear friend:

WWDFD

My best wishes for a fast and full recovery!

Over here in the US, a lot of us ask ourselves WWDFD - What Would Dr. Fauci Do?

Sorry ...

That's Dr. Stanley Fauci, who's one of the world's leading immunologists, the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a member of the White House Coronavirus Task Force.

... to hear all this from both of you.

He's one of only a couple of intelligent adults on the podium in the White House Briefing Room, and acts as a public fact-checker correcting the President. He wasn't present for today's press briefing, and he's not exactly POTUS's favourite person. I've heard him correct POTUS, calling him "Don", for example.

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But many Americans listen carefully to every word he says.

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For the UK, I'm tempted to suggest the government is guided by WWDAD - What Would Dad's Army Do?

"If your going through hell, keep going" Winston Churchill

They don't seem to have understood that "muddling through" is a prime example of ironic British self-criticism, not a proven policy guideline.

People!!

It all reminds me rather of Robin Williams's categorisation of British cops in the recording of his first live stage show: "Stop!

We cannot all afford to fall into weeping and wailing over every piece of bad news in this crisis. If I'm going to survive this I'm gonna have to put my "man pants" on, because if the virus doesn't get me, the food shortages just might. Seeing humour in the blackness is a well known defense mechanism, and I need all the help I can get. I don't expect many people to crying into their face masks at my funeral, but that's O.K. It is often said that good people don't win wars

Or I'll say 'Stop' again!"

Man pants ...

Local time: 21:46

So you have woman pants on at the minute, then?

Tuesday 24 March

Or you simply aren't wearing pants?

Mar 24

... and woman moans

Chris S asked a while ago whether there were snitches and police out and about in rural areas …

Don't even know why I bothered posting these replies, so I'm changing this.

Thursday 19 March, San José, was a holiday in a few regions, including this one, Euskadi.

They acted fast and wisely

Many Basques have a seaside home down the road in villages such as Laredo and Noja, in the region of Cantabria, and they saw a long weekend coming up.

If they have already sprayed disinfectant in the common areas of your block, they acted fast and wisely. Please take care there!

In Cantabria they’d be faced with the same lockdown, of course, but most of those pieds à terre have an upstairs and a downstairs, a terrace to relax on and a small garden, with a lot more room than in the city.

Closer Mar 23

Confinement can be so, well, confining.

It's getting closer and eerier all the time!

So a goodly number of them hopped into their cars with the kids, the dog, the cat, the goldfish and whatnot, and off to Cantabria for a few days.

I had to send a certified letter this morning (no, it wasn't a Get Well Soon card for old Harvey Babebanger), and went to Bilbao's Central Post Office, only 5 minutes from here. The queue, with 1.5 metres between each person, stretched right around the corner for about 20 metres.

Well, not quite in the end. The police were streets ahead of them, waiting just outside the city limits.

Gotta go. 4K to take care of, plus the 8 pm balcony applause draws near ...

Anybody who didn't have a reasonable explanation for being out and about in a car full of people was turned right round, and back to Bilbao.

Local time: 15:42

San José is also Father's Day.

Direct financial support for solo freelancers in Germany

A lot of fuming daddies driving back home on Thursday.

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Down to get the paper.

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Nobody about.

Basicall... See more

The administrators have also put the notice of our local infection on the lift.

New stricter measures for the UK

You never hear the lift going up and down now just outside here, because no one uses it any more.

We had an announcement from the PM this evening saying that people were allowed out only for essential shopping trips, one outing per day for exercise, etc. I was shocked to see video footage of crowded London Underground carriages this morning.

Bloody hell.

Not sure if we can walk the dogs more than once a day.

No news around that isn't coronavirus.

Have ordered some scissors to cut our hair, as the hairdresser will no doubt be closed.

The 9 pm news has been transformed into the Coronavirus Update.

Say it ain't so, Bo

Even the 3K I have left now to translate is the call to a general meeting, dotted with warnings not to attend in person even if the confinement restrictions have been lifted before the actual date of the meeting.

News of the "essential shopping trips and one outing per day" restrictions must come as such a relief to the worried population of the UK.

Heinrich Pesch

A population of, what, some 60 million?

Finland

All safe. Just as long as nobody among the 60 million cheats on it.

Local time: 22:46

Maybe somebody should ask Boris what, exactly, is "an outing"?

Finnish to German

How far does it go?

Dr. Fauci should stay at home, he is 79

How long does it last?

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How many people does it involve?

I've heard him correct POTUS, calling him "Don", for example.

What does "essential" mean?

This time I tend to agree with Mr. Trump. Is is not a good idea to ruin the economy to save people from covid-19-virus.

etc. etc. etc.

Here in the North countries like Denmark, Norway and Finland closed schools and restrict everything,

What has to happen for the Cuddly Clown to get his arse in gear?

Sweden closed only gymnasia but does not restrict people's movement.

Local time: 15:46

I would thing let us old ones (I'm 71) stay home but let the young ones do as usual and acquire immunity as soon as possible.

WWDFD

Closing will need to be lifted once, and then the second wave will spread anyway.

Over here in the US, a lot of us ask ourselves WWDFD - What Would Dr. Fauci Do?

Jan Truper

That's Dr. Stanley Fauci, who's one of the world's leading immunologists, the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a member of the White House Coronavirus Task Force.

... Mar 24

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Is is not a good idea to ruin the economy to save people from covid-19-virus.

For the UK, I'm tempted to suggest the government is guided by WWDAD - What Would Dad's Army Do?

Make sure you make your sentiments known to the health worker who has to decide whether to put you or the other guy on the ventilator.

They don't seem to have understood that "muddling through" is a prime example of ironic British self-criticism, not a proven policy guideline.

1 more...

It all reminds me rather of Robin Williams's categorisation of British cops in the recording of his first live stage show: "Stop!

Kudos to you Heinrich Pesch

Or I'll say 'Stop' again!"

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Local time: 21:46

Closing will need to be lifted once, and then the second wave will spread anyway".

Tuesday 24 March

Well said Heinrich, you are a man who can see reality beyond his own situation, some countries in Africa don't have any ventilators at all.

Mar 24

Still need ...

Chris S asked a while ago whether there were snitches and police out and about in rural areas …

... some cheering up, I do, so here's another one from the archives.

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It's a little naughty.

Many Basques have a seaside home down the road in villages such as Laredo and Noja, in the region of Cantabria, and they saw a long weekend coming up.

Make sure there aren't any children looking over your shoulder.

In Cantabria they’d be faced with the same lockdown, of course, but most of those pieds à terre have an upstairs and a downstairs, a terrace to relax on and a small garden, with a lot more room than in the city.

Are you sitting comfortably?

Confinement can be so, well, confining.

Then I'll begin:

So a goodly number of them hopped into their cars with the kids, the dog, the cat, the goldfish and whatnot, and off to Cantabria for a few days.

....

Well, not quite in the end. The police were streets ahead of them, waiting just outside the city limits.

Click.

Anybody who didn't have a reasonable explanation for being out and about in a car full of people was turned right round, and back to Bilbao.

Just a soft click, that’s all it was.

San José is also Father's Day.

A faint, barely audible click.

A lot of fuming daddies driving back home on Thursday.

The click of my hotel room door being stealthily opened.

Down to get the paper.

I sprang noiselessly from the bed, and was there in only four strides.

Nobody about.

A shard of light from the corridor illuminated a dark figure in a long coat entering the room.

The administrators have also put the notice of our local infection on the lift.

I pounced like a tiger from the side, closed my arms around his neck and was just about to snap it in one deadly jerk to the right when I smelt a perfume I recognised.

You never hear the lift going up and down now just outside here, because no one uses it any more.

“Moneypenny!” I gasped.

Bloody hell.

“What the hell are you doing here?

No news around that isn't coronavirus.

You should know better than that.

The 9 pm news has been transformed into the Coronavirus Update.

You could be lying dead on this floor right now.

Even the 3K I have left now to translate is the call to a general meeting, dotted with warnings not to attend in person even if the confinement restrictions have been lifted before the actual date of the meeting.

I’m a tightly coiled spring, for God’s sake.

Heinrich Pesch

A highly trained professional assassin.

Finland

A one-man army on Her Majesty’s Secret Service.

Local time: 22:46

A merciless killing machine capable of executing villains with my bare hands, not to mention a hundred other ways. A …”

Finnish to German

The MI5 secretary shrugged her greatcoat back, letting it fall to the floor.

Dr. Fauci should stay at home, he is 79

My jaw dropped at the sight of Moneypenny in a plunging red leather top, her navel exposed with a ring through her belly button, a matching leather mini-skirt, black fishnet stockings and suspenders and stiletto heels, and – was that a cat-o’-nine-tails she was carrying in her belt?

He's one of only a couple of intelligent adults on the podium in the White House Briefing Room, and acts as a public fact-checker correcting the President. He wasn't present for today's press briefing, and he's not exactly POTUS's favourite person.

Her tightly encased breasts rose and fell, straining against the material as she looked me up and down, smiling naughtily.

I've heard him correct POTUS, calling him "Don", for example.

“Yes, James”, she whispered, gliding towards me, hands on hips, “I know. Licensed to kill.”

This time I tend to agree with Mr. Trump. Is is not a good idea to ruin the economy to save people from covid-19-virus.

A hand stretched lazily out and long scarlet nails scraped gently down my bare chest.

Here in the North countries like Denmark, Norway and Finland closed schools and restrict everything,

“But what about … licensed to thrill?”

Sweden closed only gymnasia but does not restrict people's movement.

Moneypenny looked down, but her hand stayed there, at arm’s length.

I would thing let us old ones (I'm 71) stay home but let the young ones do as usual and acquire immunity as soon as possible.

“My, my”, she said, “Union Jack boxer shorts. How patriotic, James.”

Closing will need to be lifted once, and then the second wave will spread anyway.

She moved closer and looked down again: “Oh … and so difficult to tell whether the flag’s running up the pole or the pole’s running up the flag …”

Jan Truper

I stepped back, breathing heavily.

... Mar 24

Sweating, too.

Heinrich Pesch wrote:

The long mascara-laden eyelashes fluttered and her tongue slipped out and rolled suggestively around her upper lip as she continued to stare down, taking out that whip and gently swinging the little knotted thongs closer and closer until they finally grazed my frontage.

Is is not a good idea to ruin the economy to save people from covid-19-virus.

“Oh yes, look at that, there he goes,” she cooed, “standing to attention in anticipation of official duty.

Make sure you make your sentiments known to the health worker who has to decide whether to put you or the other guy on the ventilator.

Rising to the manly challenges ahead.

1 more...

Ready to dive in at the sharp end of a no-holds-barred rough and tumble.”

Kudos to you Heinrich Pesch

“You’re out of line, Moneypenny”, I told her, but I rushed to put a towel around myself just the same.

"I would thing let us old ones (I'm 71) stay home but let the young ones do as usual and acquire immunity as soon as possible.

“You know very well I’m spoken for.

Closing will need to be lifted once, and then the second wave will spread anyway".

The little matter of Goodbody, remember?”

Well said Heinrich, you are a man who can see reality beyond his own situation, some countries in Africa don't have any ventilators at all.

That took the wind out of her sails.

Still need ...

Moneypenny’s shoulders slumped as she withdrew the whip, sat on a chair near the bed, and lit a cigarette.

... some cheering up, I do, so here's another one from the archives.

“Oh yes”, said Moneypenny disdainfully.

It's a little naughty.

“The competition. Jane Goodbody.

Make sure there aren't any children looking over your shoulder.

Agent 008.

Are you sitting comfortably?

It’s Goodbody I’ve come to talk to you about, actually.

Then I'll begin:

The little tramp won’t be in the field with you on the mission after all.”

....

Well, I was fond of Moneypenny, but I refused to have the name of the woman I loved bandied around like that.

Click.

Just a soft click, that’s all it was.

“Jane Goodbody’s not a tramp, Moneypenny”, I growled.

A faint, barely audible click.

“What’s the matter with you, anyway?

The click of my hotel room door being stealthily opened.

What IS all this femme fatale business with me?

I sprang noiselessly from the bed, and was there in only four strides.

You can get a man for yourself.

A shard of light from the corridor illuminated a dark figure in a long coat entering the room.

You’re a smart, fine-looking woman.

I pounced like a tiger from the side, closed my arms around his neck and was just about to snap it in one deadly jerk to the right when I smelt a perfume I recognised.

You can have your pick of the bunch, surely.”

“Moneypenny!” I gasped.

Moneypenny stretched out those long legs luxuriously, shook back her dark hair and nodded dreamily, as if remembering:

“What the hell are you doing here?

“Yes, there was a man once, you know ... a man I loved.

You should know better than that.

A man I worshipped, James. I – adored – him.

You could be lying dead on this floor right now.

It was a love so intense it caused me the greatest pain and sorrow.

I’m a tightly coiled spring, for God’s sake.

And he said he loved me too.”

A highly trained professional assassin.

My heart melted a little, and the annoyance faded.

A one-man army on Her Majesty’s Secret Service.

What could I do but give her a sympathetic smile?

A merciless killing machine capable of executing villains with my bare hands, not to mention a hundred other ways. A …”

“And then”, said Moneypenny, gazing into the middle distance, reliving it all again, “then the day finally came when he showed me just how much he loved me, James.

The MI5 secretary shrugged her greatcoat back, letting it fall to the floor.

He simply whipped it out of that fur-trimmed pink velvet box with no warning, and stood there in front of me, proudly showing it off to me all hard and glistening in his strong hand.

My jaw dropped at the sight of Moneypenny in a plunging red leather top, her navel exposed with a ring through her belly button, a matching leather mini-skirt, black fishnet stockings and suspenders and stiletto heels, and – was that a cat-o’-nine-tails she was carrying in her belt?

And I simply gushed over it.”

Her tightly encased breasts rose and fell, straining against the material as she looked me up and down, smiling naughtily.

“Moneypenny”, I demurred.

“Yes, James”, she whispered, gliding towards me, hands on hips, “I know. Licensed to kill.”

“Perhaps I’m not the right person to tell this to ...”

A hand stretched lazily out and long scarlet nails scraped gently down my bare chest.

But she paid me no heed.

“But what about … licensed to thrill?”

“I was all a-quiver”, she enthused, staring straight ahead as if in a trance, “at the sight of something so tantalisingly majestic.

Moneypenny looked down, but her hand stayed there, at arm’s length.

I was transfixed.

“My, my”, she said, “Union Jack boxer shorts. How patriotic, James.”

I just couldn’t take my eyes off the thing, James.”

She moved closer and looked down again: “Oh … and so difficult to tell whether the flag’s running up the pole or the pole’s running up the flag …”

“Er, Moneypenny, really, I …”, I stammered, pulling uncomfortably at my towel.

I stepped back, breathing heavily.

But then her eyes glazed over disturbingly and rolled up in their sockets so I could see only the whites of them:

Sweating, too.

“How I trembled with excitement as he knelt down in front of me with the wickedest smile, and brought it up nearer so I could contemplate the whole gorgeous item at close quarters”, she whispered.

The long mascara-laden eyelashes fluttered and her tongue slipped out and rolled suggestively around her upper lip as she continued to stare down, taking out that whip and gently swinging the little knotted thongs closer and closer until they finally grazed my frontage.

“And then he made me his offering of love.”

“Oh yes, look at that, there he goes,” she cooed, “standing to attention in anticipation of official duty.

“Bloody hell, Moneypenny”, I gasped, staring at her in the leathers.

“He had said he was going to spend and spend and spend, and I knew he was loaded”,

Rising to the manly challenges ahead.

Moneypenny practically babbled, “but I had no idea he had such wads of the stuff.

Ready to dive in at the sharp end of a no-holds-barred rough and tumble.”

“You’re out of line, Moneypenny”, I told her, but I rushed to put a towel around myself just the same.

And then suddenly there it was on my chest, a wonderful pearl necklace.”

She whimpered a little in recollection.

“You know very well I’m spoken for.

“Oh”, I said, my lower body suddenly relaxing, “a necklace. I see.

The little matter of Goodbody, remember?”

You know, Moneypenny, for a minute …”

That took the wind out of her sails.

“Yes”, she went on, “the most splendid necklace I have ever been given.

Moneypenny’s shoulders slumped as she withdrew the whip, sat on a chair near the bed, and lit a cigarette.

I had never imagined one man alone could splash out so much on me.

“Oh yes”, said Moneypenny disdainfully.

Oh, all those white pearls!

“The competition. Jane Goodbody.

I was literally dripping with them.

Agent 008.

I looked down at the gleaming drops and little ropes and strings of it around my neck and hanging down over my cleavage, and – oh James,

It’s Goodbody I’ve come to talk to you about, actually.

I know it was utter lunacy, but I couldn’t keep my hands off it, rubbing it gratefully all over my chest, scooping it up and letting it trickle slowly through my fingers, and even slavering and slobbering and licking at it feverishly like a dog with my hot little tongue in the ecstasy of the moment because, well, you know, it just came over me.”

The little tramp won’t be in the field with you on the mission after all.”

“Good God Moneypenny, he must have been madly in love with you too”, I agreed, smoothing down my towel.

Well, I was fond of Moneypenny, but I refused to have the name of the woman I loved bandied around like that.

“So what happened?”

“Jane Goodbody’s not a tramp, Moneypenny”, I growled.

Moneypenny smiled wistfully, blew out some smoke, and sighed.

“What’s the matter with you, anyway?

“Then, James, he wiped himself off on my lovely brand new duvet, lit a Peter Stuyvesant, stuck it in my mouth, and said he was going out to get us some lattes and croissants.

What IS all this femme fatale business with me?

Never saw the bastard again from that day to this.”

You can get a man for yourself.

She stared glumly down at the floor, elbows propped up on her legs, poking at an ankle chain with the whip.

You’re a smart, fine-looking woman.

I exhaled slowly.

You can have your pick of the bunch, surely.”

Moneypenny had always been a bit of a flirt around me, but what a dark, dark horse she really was, I thought. Better to change the subject:

Moneypenny stretched out those long legs luxuriously, shook back her dark hair and nodded dreamily, as if remembering:

“Anyway, what’s all this about 008 not being able to go with me, Moneypenny?”

“Yes, there was a man once, you know ... a man I loved.

The woman jerked a little as she returned to the present, and mechanically returned the whip to her belt.

A man I worshipped, James. I – adored – him.

“Well, she says she can’t walk, James”, she sniffed.

It was a love so intense it caused me the greatest pain and sorrow.

I smiled to myself. It was me doing the remembering now.

And he said he loved me too.”

Lord, I was surprised Goodbody could even talk, never mind walk, considering the almighty right royal rogering I had given the girl the day before.

My heart melted a little, and the annoyance faded.

Lord, the prime British pork Agent 008 had packed away repeatedly into the early hours.

What could I do but give her a sympathetic smile?

“Yes, after our meeting at HQ today she tripped and fell down the stairs,”

“And then”, said Moneypenny, gazing into the middle distance, reliving it all again, “then the day finally came when he showed me just how much he loved me, James.

Moneypenny went on. “Twisted her ankle very badly.”

He simply whipped it out of that fur-trimmed pink velvet box with no warning, and stood there in front of me, proudly showing it off to me all hard and glistening in his strong hand.

“Oh … oh, tripped, did she?

And I simply gushed over it.”

I see …” I could almost feel myself deflating.

“Moneypenny”, I demurred.

Moneypenny looked warily around the room, lowering her voice:

“Perhaps I’m not the right person to tell this to ...”

“And, James”, she went on,

But she paid me no heed.

“M wants you to know you have to be extra careful on this mission – that’s another reason why I had to come here in person with no warning.

“I was all a-quiver”, she enthused, staring straight ahead as if in a trance, “at the sight of something so tantalisingly majestic.

We’ve got a mole in MI5 somewhere, and we know the target’s on to us.

I was transfixed.

We all have to be especially vigilant. I’ll be keeping my eyes open too.”

I just couldn’t take my eyes off the thing, James.”

Those dark eyelashes were suddenly back in smoulder mode:

“Er, Moneypenny, really, I …”, I stammered, pulling uncomfortably at my towel.

“But then, my eyes are always open where you’re concerned, 007.

But then her eyes glazed over disturbingly and rolled up in their sockets so I could see only the whites of them:

And my arms too.

“How I trembled with excitement as he knelt down in front of me with the wickedest smile, and brought it up nearer so I could contemplate the whole gorgeous item at close quarters”, she whispered.

Not to mention my legs”, she murmured, looking up hopefully.

“And then he made me his offering of love.”

“Er, perhaps we should just concentrate on MI5 business, Moneypenny.

“Bloody hell, Moneypenny”, I gasped, staring at her in the leathers.

So, is there anything else I should know after my meeting with M yesterday?

“He had said he was going to spend and spend and spend, and I knew he was loaded”,

…”

Moneypenny practically babbled, “but I had no idea he had such wads of the stuff.

M had briefed me at his club the day before.

And then suddenly there it was on my chest, a wonderful pearl necklace.”

He was waiting for me at the bar:

She whimpered a little in recollection.

“How about a drink, Bond?” he greeted me.

“Oh”, I said, my lower body suddenly relaxing, “a necklace. I see.

“Definitely”, I said. “

You know, Moneypenny, for a minute …”

Just the thing to bring down the usual pre-mission tension.

“Yes”, she went on, “the most splendid necklace I have ever been given.

Get me a dry Martini, would you”, I said to the barman.

I had never imagined one man alone could splash out so much on me.

“Shaken, not stirred.”

Oh, all those white pearls!

The man looked up from the glass he was polishing.

I was literally dripping with them.

“Sorry sir, no dry Martinis.

I looked down at the gleaming drops and little ropes and strings of it around my neck and hanging down over my cleavage, and – oh James,

Only wet ones.”

I know it was utter lunacy, but I couldn’t keep my hands off it, rubbing it gratefully all over my chest, scooping it up and letting it trickle slowly through my fingers, and even slavering and slobbering and licking at it feverishly like a dog with my hot little tongue in the ecstasy of the moment because, well, you know, it just came over me.”

I merely stared through him, but I could feel the index and middle finger of my right hand beginning to drum on the bar.

“Good God Moneypenny, he must have been madly in love with you too”, I agreed, smoothing down my towel.

Never a good sign.

“So what happened?”

He grinned stupidly, and turned to the bottles behind him.

Moneypenny smiled wistfully, blew out some smoke, and sighed.

“Just my little joke, sir.

“Then, James, he wiped himself off on my lovely brand new duvet, lit a Peter Stuyvesant, stuck it in my mouth, and said he was going out to get us some lattes and croissants.

One dry Martini coming up. Shaken and unstirred.”

Never saw the bastard again from that day to this.”

I called after him:

She stared glumly down at the floor, elbows propped up on her legs, poking at an ankle chain with the whip.

“Shaken, not stirred.

I exhaled slowly.

That’s the term.”

Moneypenny had always been a bit of a flirt around me, but what a dark, dark horse she really was, I thought. Better to change the subject:

“Yes sir, I heard you. Shaken, but unstirred.”

“Anyway, what’s all this about 008 not being able to go with me, Moneypenny?”

“No, I said “shaken, not stirred”. Not unstirred.”

The woman jerked a little as she returned to the present, and mechanically returned the whip to her belt.

“Not unstirred, sir?

“Well, she says she can’t walk, James”, she sniffed.

That means stirred.”

I smiled to myself. It was me doing the remembering now.

The chap was pushing his luck. I was starting to get those flashbacks of burly giants I’d dispatched over the years with neat holes between the eyes, crushed under blocks of concrete, or suffocated in huge vats of grain.

Lord, I was surprised Goodbody could even talk, never mind walk, considering the almighty right royal rogering I had given the girl the day before.

Never a good sign either. I tried to keep my voice steady:

Lord, the prime British pork Agent 008 had packed away repeatedly into the early hours.

“It’s simple”, I said, “I want it shaken, not stirred, not shaken and unstirred.”

“Yes, after our meeting at HQ today she tripped and fell down the stairs,”

He folded his arms.

Moneypenny went on. “Twisted her ankle very badly.”

“So now you don’t want it shaken, either?

“Oh … oh, tripped, did she?

Do make up your mind, sir.

I see …” I could almost feel myself deflating.

Do you want this Martini shaken or unshaken, and stirred or unstirred?”

Moneypenny looked warily around the room, lowering her voice:

The stupid grin again.

“And, James”, she went on,

The coiled spring was reaching trip point. I slipped my hand into my pocket and felt the welcome cold steel of the Walther PPK. I beckoned him over, my lip curling.

“M wants you to know you have to be extra careful on this mission – that’s another reason why I had to come here in person with no warning.

He plodded up. I grabbed him by the lapels.

We’ve got a mole in MI5 somewhere, and we know the target’s on to us.

M leaned across and put a restraining hand on my arm.

We all have to be especially vigilant. I’ll be keeping my eyes open too.”

“Bond”, he whispered. “Not here, if you please.” He gestured around the room.

Those dark eyelashes were suddenly back in smoulder mode:

“My club, you know. Not on, James. I mean, that’s the Chancellor of the Exchequer over there with his fancy woman, for heaven’s sake.

“But then, my eyes are always open where you’re concerned, 007.

And do you see the Lord Chief Justice with that spotty lad in the corner?”

And my arms too.

He turned to the waiter.

Not to mention my legs”, she murmured, looking up hopefully.

“Dry Martini. Shaken.

“Er, perhaps we should just concentrate on MI5 business, Moneypenny.

Not stirred.

So, is there anything else I should know after my meeting with M yesterday?

Two minutes ago”, he rapped.

…”

We took our drinks to a secluded table.

M had briefed me at his club the day before.

“Who’s the mark this time, M?” I asked.

He was waiting for me at the bar:

M looked to left and right, and pushed the dossier across to me.

“How about a drink, Bond?” he greeted me.

“Details are sketchy about this Scarawanga man.

“Definitely”, I said. “

We don’t know much about his life, only bits and pieces from the wire here and there, you know how it is.

Just the thing to bring down the usual pre-mission tension.

Korea, Vietnam, Berlin, KGB, Stasi, a bit of double-agenting now and again.

Get me a dry Martini, would you”, I said to the barman.

A gun fetishist, too.

“Shaken, not stirred.”

A collector. Lugers, Mausers, Glocks, Berettas, Kalashnikovs, even the Walther PPK, you name it, he’s got it.

The man looked up from the glass he was polishing.

But he wanted to make his own guns, too.

“Sorry sir, no dry Martinis.

Which caused him a bit of a personal contretemps a few years ago, though.

Only wet ones.”

He made off with a load of gold bars after a daring robbery at Fort Knox.

I merely stared through him, but I could feel the index and middle finger of my right hand beginning to drum on the bar.

Melted them all down, and the idea was to use precision-moulding equipment to make himself a set of solid gold assault rifles.”

Never a good sign.

M leaned forward. “The Man with the Golden Gun”, he finished, pausing to let it sink in.

He grinned stupidly, and turned to the bottles behind him.

The boss sat back in his chair. I took a sip of the Martini and whistled.

“Just my little joke, sir.

“They’re a strange bunch, M, these master criminals”.

One dry Martini coming up. Shaken and unstirred.”

“Well, Bond, that wasn’t the end of it. His golden gun thing didn’t quite work out the way he’d planned”, M went on.

I called after him:

“Our information is that he had turned round and bent down to adjust the parameters on the console because the gold wasn’t hardening fast enough, but the numeric control wasn’t as finely tuned as he’d thought, and in an admittedly unlikely scenario, which we’re stuck with nonetheless, the moulding equipment blew up, ripped through his clothes and spattered hot liquid gold out at him.

“Shaken, not stirred.

Some of it penetrated his skin, and the rest was left on the outside.

That’s the term.”

He could hardly go to Accident & Emergency, obviously, meanwhile the gold hardened in, and when he did get a doctor he trusted to take a look, it turned out it would be far too dangerous to remove it. Since most of the force of it was directed at his rear end, it was practically covered with a kind of grotesque gold mosaic.”

“Yes sir, I heard you. Shaken, but unstirred.”

“So, not so much the “Man with the Golden Gun”, I said, “as the “Man with the Golden Bum.”

“No, I said “shaken, not stirred”. Not unstirred.”

“Right, James. The damn fool. Goldeneye!”, chortled M.

“Not unstirred, sir?

“Well, sir, I’ve heard of a golden shower, but that’s ridiculous!”

That means stirred.”

Yes, we both had a good chuckle at the evil fiend’s misfortunes.

The chap was pushing his luck. I was starting to get those flashbacks of burly giants I’d dispatched over the years with neat holes between the eyes, crushed under blocks of concrete, or suffocated in huge vats of grain.

Well, one of us was tasked with planning the cold-blooded elimination of cold-blooded megalomaniac despots and cold-blooded master criminals worldwide, and one of us had to cold-bloodedly carry out those cold-blooded plans to keep the world safe from cold-blooded cold-bloodedness, and the responsibility and the pressure of all that cold blood can be overpowering, you know.

Never a good sign either. I tried to keep my voice steady:

You need to laugh now and again …

“It’s simple”, I said, “I want it shaken, not stirred, not shaken and unstirred.”

Moneypenny nodded sadly. “All right, James. You win.

He folded his arms.

Let’s go over the mission update.”

“So now you don’t want it shaken, either?

Just then there was a knock at the door. Again I sprang into action:

Do make up your mind, sir.

“Quick, Moneypenny, get behind the curtains”, I ordered.

Do you want this Martini shaken or unshaken, and stirred or unstirred?”

“Could be a hit. I’ll deal with this.”

The stupid grin again.

…

The coiled spring was reaching trip point. I slipped my hand into my pocket and felt the welcome cold steel of the Walther PPK. I beckoned him over, my lip curling.

Lingua 5B

He plodded up. I grabbed him by the lapels.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

German to Serbian

M leaned across and put a restraining hand on my arm.

Diary March 24

“Bond”, he whispered. “Not here, if you please.” He gestured around the room.

- Woke up to see 3 meters of white powder in front of my house.

“My club, you know. Not on, James. I mean, that’s the Chancellor of the Exchequer over there with his fancy woman, for heaven’s sake.

After four months of winter without a trace a snow, I see this two days after March 21st, the official spring arrival day.

And do you see the Lord Chief Justice with that spotty lad in the corner?”

Took out my snow boots and warm merino clothing and went out for a walk while avoiding people.

He turned to the waiter.

Saw a long line in front of local convenience store with people freezing outdoor in line under heavy snow waiting to buy groceries (only two people at a time allowed inside the store).

“Dry Martini. Shaken.

- Got invitation from a friend for Zoom meeting which will be her online birthday party with about 20 people.

Not stirred.

Not sure what to think of it really.

Two minutes ago”, he rapped.

- In the first week of quarantine I kind of started empathizing with prisoners and paranoid mental health patients, but don’t feel it anymore.

We took our drinks to a secluded table.

It seems the frog has already been boiled?

“Who’s the mark this time, M?” I asked.

Golden shower

M looked to left and right, and pushed the dossier across to me.

Nice story Mervyn.

“Details are sketchy about this Scarawanga man.

Can't wait for the next episode.

We don’t know much about his life, only bits and pieces from the wire here and there, you know how it is.

Supermarket

Korea, Vietnam, Berlin, KGB, Stasi, a bit of double-agenting now and again.

Down to the supermarket, where, even if you are wearing gloves like I was, at the entrance they insist on (a) popping another pair of their own thin common-or-garden plastic gloves over them or (b) coating your gloves with gel. I went for (a), because (b) seemed vaguely pornographic, gelling up the latex.

A gun fetishist, too.

Supermarkets are dodgy places, they say.

A collector. Lugers, Mausers, Glocks, Berettas, Kalashnikovs, even the Walther PPK, you name it, he’s got it.

And the logistics are frightening.

But he wanted to make his own guns, too.

When you get home you have to throw away any plastic bags you may have acquired, plus the packaging, plus just about anything at all, AND wash any of the products AND wash yourself too.

Which caused him a bit of a personal contretemps a few years ago, though.

But I think this is overdoing things.

He made off with a load of gold bars after a daring robbery at Fort Knox.

Plus, what do I do with the euro notes and coins I'm given?

Melted them all down, and the idea was to use precision-moulding equipment to make himself a set of solid gold assault rifles.”

I handle them with gloves, but do I have to wash the notes or what?

M leaned forward. “The Man with the Golden Gun”, he finished, pausing to let it sink in.

On one of my trips yonks ago to N Ireland, I saw that Bank of Ireland or Ulster Bank or someone had issued a plastic fiver you could actually wash.

The boss sat back in his chair. I took a sip of the Martini and whistled.

Totally washable and, er, submergeable.

“They’re a strange bunch, M, these master criminals”.

It wasn't in circulation long.

“Well, Bond, that wasn’t the end of it. His golden gun thing didn’t quite work out the way he’d planned”, M went on.

Bit of an Irish joke.

“Our information is that he had turned round and bent down to adjust the parameters on the console because the gold wasn’t hardening fast enough, but the numeric control wasn’t as finely tuned as he’d thought, and in an admittedly unlikely scenario, which we’re stuck with nonetheless, the moulding equipment blew up, ripped through his clothes and spattered hot liquid gold out at him.

They say there are supply problems, but I don't see much of that yet. I do notice that people have been stocking up on bleach, with the current craze of cleaning anything and everything thoroughly.

Some of it penetrated his skin, and the rest was left on the outside.

And, since people aren't getting out to the bars, not so much of a selection of beers left.

He could hardly go to Accident & Emergency, obviously, meanwhile the gold hardened in, and when he did get a doctor he trusted to take a look, it turned out it would be far too dangerous to remove it. Since most of the force of it was directed at his rear end, it was practically covered with a kind of grotesque gold mosaic.”

They didn't have any of my favourite Alhambra 1925, only the "red" beer variety.

“So, not so much the “Man with the Golden Gun”, I said, “as the “Man with the Golden Bum.”

Conversely, there hadn't been much of a run on another erstwhile popular brand ... Corona.

“Right, James. The damn fool. Goldeneye!”, chortled M.

LOL yes, all sorts of funny situations encountered.

“Well, sir, I’ve heard of a golden shower, but that’s ridiculous!”

I was buying some supplies in pharmacy the other day and they have a 2 meter distance rule between buyers but also between the buyer and the pharmacist/seller.

Yes, we both had a good chuckle at the evil fiend’s misfortunes.

I had to hand her my credit card at the end of the purchase, was thinking about stepping 2 meters away and throwing it toward her like a frisbee.

Well, one of us was tasked with planning the cold-blooded elimination of cold-blooded megalomaniac despots and cold-blooded master criminals worldwide, and one of us had to cold-bloodedly carry out those cold-blooded plans to keep the world safe from cold-blooded cold-bloodedness, and the responsibility and the pressure of all that cold blood can be overpowering, you know.

@Lingua 5B

You need to laugh now and again …

I must tell you this, Lingua 5B.

Moneypenny nodded sadly. “All right, James. You win.

I read your first sentence on the mobile phone, in bad light, and mistakenly read it as "... in front of my nose", and thought,

Let’s go over the mission update.”

Wow, that's one huge snort!

Just then there was a knock at the door. Again I sprang into action:

LOL

“Quick, Moneypenny, get behind the curtains”, I ordered.

I read your first sentence on the mobile phone, in bad light, and mistakenly read it as "... in front of my nose", and thought, Wow, that's one huge snort!

“Could be a hit. I’ll deal with this.”

You have vivid imagination which is good for all the stories you create here.

…

The Arts Council to the rescue (not)

Lingua 5B

Coronavirus: Arts Council England launches £160m emergency package.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The arts being made up of 95% freelancers, is to receive the above generous boon.

German to Serbian

There are only a couple of problems;

Diary March 24

1.

- Woke up to see 3 meters of white powder in front of my house.

You will only receive money if you are already in receipt of Arts council funding.

After four months of winter without a trace a snow, I see this two days after March 21st, the official spring arrival day.

2.

Took out my snow boots and warm merino clothing and went out for a walk while avoiding people.

It will take up to six weeks.

Saw a long line in front of local convenience store with people freezing outdoor in line under heavy snow waiting to buy groceries (only two people at a time allowed inside the store).

SIX WEEKS.!!!

- Got invitation from a friend for Zoom meeting which will be her online birthday party with about 20 people.

No wonder arts industry workers including classical musicians who have never been far from the money, are forced to go cap in hand to the Universal Credit system.

Not sure what to think of it really.

That was until the universal credit identity portal just crashed, from over use.

- In the first week of quarantine I kind of started empathizing with prisoners and paranoid mental health patients, but don’t feel it anymore.

Like I said, if the virus doesn't kill us, the starvation surely will.

It seems the frog has already been boiled?

Barbara Adamic Dekovic

Golden shower

Croatia

Nice story Mervyn.

French to Croatian

Can't wait for the next episode.

It can be worse...

Supermarket

Dear colleagues, it can always get worse. Imagine… quarantine accompanied by earthquakes- three days in a row. Greetings from Zagreb, Croatia.

Down to the supermarket, where, even if you are wearing gloves like I was, at the entrance they insist on (a) popping another pair of their own thin common-or-garden plastic gloves over them or (b) coating your gloves with gel. I went for (a), because (b) seemed vaguely pornographic, gelling up the latex.

Plastic

Supermarkets are dodgy places, they say.

All bank notes in the UK are plastic and washable now, Mervyn.

And the logistics are frightening.

No joke.

When you get home you have to throw away any plastic bags you may have acquired, plus the packaging, plus just about anything at all, AND wash any of the products AND wash yourself too.

Don’t you do contactless and ApplePay type stuff in Spain?

But I think this is overdoing things.

It’s definitely the way to go right now and was already getting fairly standard over here.

Plus, what do I do with the euro notes and coins I'm given?

I rarely carry cash any more, and I’m out in the boondocks where life is largely unchanged from the 1970s.

I handle them with gloves, but do I have to wash the notes or what?

We even say hello to strangers.

On one of my trips yonks ago to N Ireland, I saw that Bank of Ireland or Ulster Bank or someone had issued a plastic fiver you could actually wash.

Well, maybe not now.

Totally washable and, er, submergeable.

I did my regulation one form of daily exercise today and most people I passed pretty much ran away.

It wasn't in circulation long.

Even more so than usual.

Bit of an Irish joke.

Either my sexual allure is finally waning or people are beginning to get scared.

They say there are supply problems, but I don't see much of that yet. I do notice that people have been stocking up on bleach, with the current craze of cleaning anything and everything thoroughly.

Southwest Wales is only at 27 known cases across a population of 400,000, though, so we’re doing pretty well so far.

And, since people aren't getting out to the bars, not so much of a selection of beers left.

Local time: 15:52

They didn't have any of my favourite Alhambra 1925, only the "red" beer variety.

What exactly do you mean...

Conversely, there hadn't been much of a run on another erstwhile popular brand ... Corona.

...Heinrich?

LOL yes, all sorts of funny situations encountered.

That companies should start producing goods again with a workforce that isn't there for customers who aren't going to buy?

I was buying some supplies in pharmacy the other day and they have a 2 meter distance rule between buyers but also between the buyer and the pharmacist/seller.

That airlines should fly all their routes again with empty planes?

I had to hand her my credit card at the end of the purchase, was thinking about stepping 2 meters away and throwing it toward her like a frisbee.

That hotels should open up again for guests who won't be arriving?

@Lingua 5B

This is the typical voodoo economics that we've all grown used to over the past three years. In contrast to what POTUS says, we've gone beyond a financial crisis and already have an economic crisis, and we won't start overcoming until we've effectively beaten Covid-19.

I must tell you this, Lingua 5B.

Luckily for the inhabitants of the United States, decisions on lockdowns and social distancing are taken at local and state level, not at federal level.

I read your first sentence on the mobile phone, in bad light, and mistakenly read it as "... in front of my nose", and thought,

And Dr. Fauci is putting his life on the line for the people of the United States.

Wow, that's one huge snort!

By the way, what's really worrying the scientists is that a growing number of young people are also dying of Covid-19, and if they survive, they have conditions like scarred lung tissue.

LOL

We should try and prevent the second wave from spreading until we have effective vaccines, not rely on the myth of herd immunity.

I read your first sentence on the mobile phone, in bad light, and mistakenly read it as "... in front of my nose", and thought, Wow, that's one huge snort!

Local time: 21:52

You have vivid imagination which is good for all the stories you create here.

Wednesday 25 March

The Arts Council to the rescue (not)

Mar 25

Coronavirus: Arts Council England launches £160m emergency package.

Downstairs for the paper, gloves, tiptoe to avoid the neighbours, shunning the lift, blah-blah.

The arts being made up of 95% freelancers, is to receive the above generous boon.

Mikel tells me he's taken a 50% cut in newspaper sales.

There are only a couple of problems;

Not surprising, considering he's just off the main drag, Gran Vía, with the banks, bars and fancy outlets all round about now closed or on skeleton service.

1.

Could be much worse, as Barbara reminds us from Zagreb. Quarantine AND earthquakes. Hang in there, Barbara!

You will only receive money if you are already in receipt of Arts council funding.

Some good news here, though.

2.

Get this - the crime rate has dropped by 60-70%, crow the powers-that-be.

It will take up to six weeks.

Obviously, no need to worry so much about getting a bottle in my face in a bar, or being mugged buying the paper or buying my food at the supermarket or Paracetamol at the pharmacy, or getting caught at CaixaBank with two or three bank robbers wearing masks.

SIX WEEKS.!!!

Amid a few masked customers.

No wonder arts industry workers including classical musicians who have never been far from the money, are forced to go cap in hand to the Universal Credit system.

I jest, I jest - Bilbao's always been quite a safe place.

That was until the universal credit identity portal just crashed, from over use.

And I don't mean it has an "acceptable level of violence", the term used by Margaret Thatcher to play down the situation in the northern climes of the Wet Rock in the late 70s/early 80s.

Like I said, if the virus doesn't kill us, the starvation surely will.

No, quite safe, I've always thought.

Barbara Adamic Dekovic

Woke up with a sore throat this morning.

Croatia

But that often happens, even though I haven't smoked for years and years, and it's quickly remedied with a water + salt gargle.

French to Croatian

Why use the blue/pink/green commercial gargles?

It can be worse...

If you want your breath to smell fresh, just brush your teeth, John.

Dear colleagues, it can always get worse. Imagine… quarantine accompanied by earthquakes- three days in a row. Greetings from Zagreb, Croatia.

And so to work. It's been almost two weeks since I translated anything that didn't contain the word "coronavirus".

Plastic

And ...

All bank notes in the UK are plastic and washable now, Mervyn.

... today's offering for anyone at a loose end:

No joke.

Reading Gaol,

Don’t you do contactless and ApplePay type stuff in Spain?

22

It’s definitely the way to go right now and was already getting fairly standard over here.

January 1896

I rarely carry cash any more, and I’m out in the boondocks where life is largely unchanged from the 1970s.

Dearest dearest Mosie,

We even say hello to strangers.

Here I am in a simply hateful little cell in Reading.

Well, maybe not now.

Designed by Helen Keller, by the looks of it.

I did my regulation one form of daily exercise today and most people I passed pretty much ran away.

Every day I walk the treadmill, pick the oakum, and sew mail bags.

Even more so than usual.

I had been sewing some absolutely delightful little patterns until an utter brute of a warder came up and said:

Either my sexual allure is finally waning or people are beginning to get scared.

“’Ere, Wilde, wot you effin' fink you’re effin' doin' stitchin' effin' angels into them effin' bags?”

Southwest Wales is only at 27 known cases across a population of 400,000, though, so we’re doing pretty well so far.

Oh Mosie, the dandy of the Dorchester no longer.

Local time: 15:52

Adieu to the toast of Tottenham Court Road.

Gone are the days when the crème de la crème of London Town admitted me to their parlours and dining rooms with carte blanche to be entertainingly rude and foppish to all and sundry.

What exactly do you mean...

...Heinrich?

I say, do you remember that weekend at Lord Caernarvon’s little place in the country when we were gorging ourselves on canapés and swilling back Veuve Clicquot by the case like there was no tomorrow, and that dreadful hatchet-faced woman flounced up in all her haughtiness and said:

“Mr Wilde, you are drunk, Sir, revoltingly drunk.”

That companies should start producing goods again with a workforce that isn't there for customers who aren't going to buy?

That airlines should fly all their routes again with empty planes?

Do you?

That hotels should open up again for guests who won't be arriving?

And do you remember how I sent her packing?

This is the typical voodoo economics that we've all grown used to over the past three years. In contrast to what POTUS says, we've gone beyond a financial crisis and already have an economic crisis, and we won't start overcoming until we've effectively beaten Covid-19.

“

And you, Madam, are ugly, revoltingly ugly, but at least tomorrow I shall be sober.”

Luckily for the inhabitants of the United States, decisions on lockdowns and social distancing are taken at local and state level, not at federal level.

Ah, the wit, Mosie, the biting satire, the mordant repartee, all lost and gone forever since they sent me to this awful place.

And Dr. Fauci is putting his life on the line for the people of the United States.

And the plays, the novels, the poetry.

By the way, what's really worrying the scientists is that a growing number of young people are also dying of Covid-19, and if they survive, they have conditions like scarred lung tissue.

The Importance of Being Earnest.

We should try and prevent the second wave from spreading until we have effective vaccines, not rely on the myth of herd immunity.

A Woman of No Importance.

Local time: 21:52

Lady Windermere’s Fan.

Wednesday 25 March

Do you recall I was originally going to make it “Lady Windermere’s Pussy”, but there was a problem with the censors, so I had to write in all that ludicrous stuff about fans.

Mar 25

Yes, here I languish, and my only crime some harmless woo-wooing and shirt-lifting now and again in Victoria’s stifling, taboo-ridden realm.

Downstairs for the paper, gloves, tiptoe to avoid the neighbours, shunning the lift, blah-blah.

There are other poor souls in here who are much worse off than me, though.

Mikel tells me he's taken a 50% cut in newspaper sales.

One rather large gentleman I’ve become extremely fond of.

Not surprising, considering he's just off the main drag, Gran Vía, with the banks, bars and fancy outlets all round about now closed or on skeleton service.

As muscly and exciting as those dockers I told you I used to spy on from behind pallets on the wharves of Dublin.

Could be much worse, as Barbara reminds us from Zagreb. Quarantine AND earthquakes. Hang in there, Barbara!

We first met in the showers.

Some good news here, though.

He happened to be standing behind me as I bent down to pick up the soap.

Get this - the crime rate has dropped by 60-70%, crow the powers-that-be.

“You’re Wilde, aintcha?

Obviously, no need to worry so much about getting a bottle in my face in a bar, or being mugged buying the paper or buying my food at the supermarket or Paracetamol at the pharmacy, or getting caught at CaixaBank with two or three bank robbers wearing masks.

Well, you oughta effin' know I’m the effin' Daddy in 'ere,” he told me with a terrible tender roughness that sliced through my very heartstrings.

Amid a few masked customers.

I was trembling as I cried:

I jest, I jest - Bilbao's always been quite a safe place.

"Yes, o yes, I'm Wilde all right. I'm your very own wild boy.

And I don't mean it has an "acceptable level of violence", the term used by Margaret Thatcher to play down the situation in the northern climes of the Wet Rock in the late 70s/early 80s.

And I'd be just enchanted to play Mummy to your Daddy.”

No, quite safe, I've always thought.

It was in Reading Gaol, Mosie, that despite the terrible misery of the place I discovered the true meaning of doing Her Majesty’s Pleasure.

Woke up with a sore throat this morning.

Certainly brought the tears to my eyes, I can tell you.

But that often happens, even though I haven't smoked for years and years, and it's quickly remedied with a water + salt gargle.

Woo, woo!

Why use the blue/pink/green commercial gargles?

I knew he was one of us, Mosie, the very first time I clapped eyes on him.

If you want your breath to smell fresh, just brush your teeth, John.

"That fellow's got to swing," I had written in my notes for a special ballad I’m thinking of writing in here.

And so to work. It's been almost two weeks since I translated anything that didn't contain the word "coronavirus".

And he certainly does swing,

And ...

Mosie. Woo, woo!

... today's offering for anyone at a loose end:

Plus he’s due to be hanged for murder most foul, so unfortunately he’ll be swinging in a rather different way shortly.

Reading Gaol,

What a shame.

22

Did you read about my damnably cruel trial, Mosie?

January 1896

Heavens, it was the most horrendous miscarriage of justice, don’t you know.

Dearest dearest Mosie,

The full fifteen rounds with the Marquis of Queensbury.

Here I am in a simply hateful little cell in Reading.

And Lord Carson too. Dear old Carson - I remember him from when Mamma sent me to study at TCD, you know.

Designed by Helen Keller, by the looks of it.

The carefree days of gowns, mortarboards, cloisters, Georgian door arches and red brick in Dublin, and then years later the monster is responsible for my institutionalisation.

Every day I walk the treadmill, pick the oakum, and sew mail bags.

“Are you a sodomite, Sir?”

I had been sewing some absolutely delightful little patterns until an utter brute of a warder came up and said:

Carson asked me in court for the prosecution.

“’Ere, Wilde, wot you effin' fink you’re effin' doin' stitchin' effin' angels into them effin' bags?”

“The lives of human beings may take a variety of directions,” I defended myself.

Oh Mosie, the dandy of the Dorchester no longer.

“One little piggy may go to market, another little piggy may eat roast beef and so on, whereas this particular little piggy may go woo-woo-woo all the way home.”

He chose to ignore this.

Adieu to the toast of Tottenham Court Road.

“Have you practised this unspeakably outrageous, foul and infinitely godless fornicatory activity, Sir?” was the next question.

Gone are the days when the crème de la crème of London Town admitted me to their parlours and dining rooms with carte blanche to be entertainingly rude and foppish to all and sundry.

“My dear fellow,” I replied.

I say, do you remember that weekend at Lord Caernarvon’s little place in the country when we were gorging ourselves on canapés and swilling back Veuve Clicquot by the case like there was no tomorrow, and that dreadful hatchet-faced woman flounced up in all her haughtiness and said:

“Allow me to put it like this.

“Mr Wilde, you are drunk, Sir, revoltingly drunk.”

Sometimes a man has to do what a man has to do, and a boy has to woo what a boy has to woo.”

Do you?

The judge was by no means impartial, either.

And do you remember how I sent her packing?

“Stand up, Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde,” he rasped.

“

"Your offence does not permit the death penalty to be handed down, but believe me I would have no difficulty whatsoever in donning the black cap in that case. I would personally prefer you to be well hung.”

I just couldn’t resist it, Mosie. I was in there faster than a speeding bullet.

And you, Madam, are ugly, revoltingly ugly, but at least tomorrow I shall be sober.”

My last jibe in public, if you like:

“I too, your honour," I simpered.

Ah, the wit, Mosie, the biting satire, the mordant repartee, all lost and gone forever since they sent me to this awful place.

“You simply wouldn't believe how many pretty men have told me the same.

And the plays, the novels, the poetry.

I bet you say that to all the boys with quiffs who appear before you.

The Importance of Being Earnest.

Woo, woo!”

A Woman of No Importance.

After he had passed sentence, I was asked if I had anything to say.

Lady Windermere’s Fan.

“Of course I have,” I cried. “I have two vitally important things to say … “ – and, dear Mosie, a great hush descended on the room –

Do you recall I was originally going to make it “Lady Windermere’s Pussy”, but there was a problem with the censors, so I had to write in all that ludicrous stuff about fans.

“I wish firstly to say in connection with my trial that it is no exaggeration whatsoever to state that the clerk of the court has an absolutely darling little wig, and further that I would be simply thrilled if the splendidly handsome gentleman two rows from the back in the delightful pink and turquoise waistcoat could see his way to paying me a visit some day at Pentonville.”

Yes, here I languish, and my only crime some harmless woo-wooing and shirt-lifting now and again in Victoria’s stifling, taboo-ridden realm.

Local time: 00:52

a complete lockdown

There are other poor souls in here who are much worse off than me, though.

Last evening, the PM of Mauritius announced a complete lockdown. It includes supermarkets, bakeries, pharmacies, everything and will last until 31 March!

One rather large gentleman I’ve become extremely fond of.

Excluding today, that's 6 days of no new supplies and the announcement came with no prior warning.

Later last night, there was a break-in at a supermarket. If they don't lift this nonsensical order soon, more break-ins are bound to follow.

As muscly and exciting as those dockers I told you I used to spy on from behind pallets on the wharves of Dublin.

Agree.

Zibow Retailleau wrote:

We first met in the showers.

Later last night, there was a break-in at a supermarket.

If they don't lift this nonsensical order soon, more break-ins are bound to follow.

He happened to be standing behind me as I bent down to pick up the soap.

I was also thinking burglars and thieves would see all this as an opportunity (if they don't care about police or prison, why would they about a virus.

“You’re Wilde, aintcha?

We are all in prison right now anyway).

Well, you oughta effin' know I’m the effin' Daddy in 'ere,” he told me with a terrible tender roughness that sliced through my very heartstrings.

Besides, a policeman should always keep at least 2 meter distance from a thief right, so how will detention happen?

Diary March 25

I was trembling as I cried:

Went to get groceries.

"Yes, o yes, I'm Wilde all right. I'm your very own wild boy.

Everybody is under masks so people cannot hear each other well as everybody speaks through a mask.

And I'd be just enchanted to play Mummy to your Daddy.”

- Two loafs of bread please.

It was in Reading Gaol, Mosie, that despite the terrible misery of the place I discovered the true meaning of doing Her Majesty’s Pleasure.

- Excuse me Ma'am, what did you just say, repeat please?

Certainly brought the tears to my eyes, I can tell you.

- Smaller or bigger ones?

- Excuse me, I did not hear you well, can you repeat?

Woo, woo!

- Oh the smaller ones please.

I knew he was one of us, Mosie, the very first time I clapped eyes on him.

- Thank you Ma'am.

"That fellow's got to swing," I had written in my notes for a special ballad I’m thinking of writing in here.

- Excuse me, I did not hear you well, can you say again?

And he certainly does swing,

- I said: thank you Ma'am.

Mosie. Woo, woo!

- Oh thank you as well, bye and stay well.

Plus he’s due to be hanged for murder most foul, so unfortunately he’ll be swinging in a rather different way shortly.

Another thing it's quite psychologically odd not seeing people faces, they say eyes are windows to the soul, that's OK but I need to see the whole face to know what a person is truly thinking, to see micro-expressions etc.

What a shame.

Very odd, as if I landed on a different planet.

Did you read about my damnably cruel trial, Mosie?

Everything?

Heavens, it was the most horrendous miscarriage of justice, don’t you know.

Doesn't make much sense to shut everything down with no notice.

The full fifteen rounds with the Marquis of Queensbury.

Hospitals too?

And Lord Carson too. Dear old Carson - I remember him from when Mamma sent me to study at TCD, you know.

Those in the know will have nipped out just ahead of the order, to stock up at the supermarkets and the pharmacies, of course.

The carefree days of gowns, mortarboards, cloisters, Georgian door arches and red brick in Dublin, and then years later the monster is responsible for my institutionalisation.

. Mar 25

“Are you a sodomite, Sir?”

No, I think hospitals are still running, at least the one where few dozen coronavirus patients are being treated.

Carson asked me in court for the prosecution.

But other than hospitals, yes, everything. I find it unbelievable too.

“The lives of human beings may take a variety of directions,” I defended myself.

Shops were closed at 2:30 p.m. and the announcement was made in the evening.

“One little piggy may go to market, another little piggy may eat roast beef and so on, whereas this particular little piggy may go woo-woo-woo all the way home.”

Not even given a chance of panic-buying.

He chose to ignore this.

Maybe some people indeed knew beforehand, the privileged few.

“Have you practised this unspeakably outrageous, foul and infinitely godless fornicatory activity, Sir?” was the next question.

I don't think they need to worry about supplies, though.

I agree with you. I'm afraid burglars now have a carpe diem mentality.

“My dear fellow,” I replied.

I've been living in Mauritius for a few months.

“Allow me to put it like this.

Not until today did I feel the need to look up the emergency numbers.

Sometimes a man has to do what a man has to do, and a boy has to woo what a boy has to woo.”

Since the first cases, I've noticed a change in people's behaviour.

The judge was by no means impartial, either.

They are more, well, passionate. I know several people here had their houses broken in, one by men armed with machetes.

Where I live is not a rich ghetto.

“Stand up, Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde,” he rasped.

Still, I'm cautious.

Gabriella Vento

"Your offence does not permit the death penalty to be handed down, but believe me I would have no difficulty whatsoever in donning the black cap in that case. I would personally prefer you to be well hung.”

Local time: 13:52

I just couldn’t resist it, Mosie. I was in there faster than a speeding bullet.

English to Hungarian

My last jibe in public, if you like:

Great summary!

“I too, your honour," I simpered.

Just one thing has been left out: build a (closer) bond with your children

“You simply wouldn't believe how many pretty men have told me the same.

ph-b wrote:

- If none available, pick a MOOC course,

I bet you say that to all the boys with quiffs who appear before you.

Woo, woo!”

- Finish that crossword magazine bought in... 2018 (2/3rds to complete yet),

- Design a new bed for the flower garden and look up forgotten traditional vegs for the veg patch.

After he had passed sentence, I was asked if I had anything to say.

Anything else?

“Of course I have,” I cried. “I have two vitally important things to say … “ – and, dear Mosie, a great hush descended on the room –

This was posted on LinkedIn yesterday

“I wish firstly to say in connection with my trial that it is no exaggeration whatsoever to state that the clerk of the court has an absolutely darling little wig, and further that I would be simply thrilled if the splendidly handsome gentleman two rows from the back in the delightful pink and turquoise waistcoat could see his way to paying me a visit some day at Pentonville.”

Heard a Dr. on TV say to get through the boredom of self-isolation we should finish things we start and thus have more calm in our lives.

Local time: 00:52

So I looked through the house to find all the things I've started but hadn't finished...so I finished off a bottle of Merlot, a bottle of Chardonnay, a bodle of Baileys, a butle of wum, tha mainder of Valiumun srciptuns, an a box a chocletz.

a complete lockdown

Yu haf no idr how feckin fablus I feel rite now.

Last evening, the PM of Mauritius announced a complete lockdown. It includes supermarkets, bakeries, pharmacies, everything and will last until 31 March!

Sned this to all who need inner piss.

Excluding today, that's 6 days of no new supplies and the announcement came with no prior warning.

Get a cat!

Later last night, there was a break-in at a supermarket. If they don't lift this nonsensical order soon, more break-ins are bound to follow.

Another circulating theory:

Agree.

Cats are natural hosts of some types of CV (FCoV) with the genetic structure close to the current monster.

Zibow Retailleau wrote:

It has never hurt human before and still does not.

Not lethal for cats either.

Later last night, there was a break-in at a supermarket.

Therefore, cat owners have been subjected to "silent immunization", which could possibly make them more resistant to COVID-19.

If they don't lift this nonsensical order soon, more break-ins are bound to follow.

I was also thinking burglars and thieves would see all this as an opportunity (if they don't care about police or prison, why would they about a virus.

Gosh, this is one theory I'd love to believe in.

Even if not, still, get a cat.

We are all in prison right now anyway).

They will help you in your isolation a lot. In fact, this is a current trend in the US - to adopt or at least foster shelter pets.

Besides, a policeman should always keep at least 2 meter distance from a thief right, so how will detention happen?

My only hope is that the same people will not be returning them back to shelters when the lockdown is over...

Diary March 25

But at least that will save some cats from lab torture, since the first part of this theory is true.

Went to get groceries.

That's so funny!

Everybody is under masks so people cannot hear each other well as everybody speaks through a mask.

IrinaN wrote: Another circulating theory:

- Two loafs of bread please.

It has never hurt human before and still does not. Not lethal for cats either.

- Excuse me Ma'am, what did you just say, repeat please?

It's like saying, I get a cold a couple of times a year so I've been subjected to "silent immunization" because the common cold viruses are also coronaviruses.

- Smaller or bigger ones?

Somehow I think this can be safely locked away with all the other coronavirus myths.

- Excuse me, I did not hear you well, can you repeat?

My four dogs would probably make a cat's life difficult, but at least you have to go outside if you have dogs.

- Oh the smaller ones please.

Thursday 26 March

- Thank you Ma'am.

Mar 26

- Excuse me, I did not hear you well, can you say again?

Kind of superfluous to tell you I went downstairs to get the paper and throw out the rubbish.

- I said: thank you Ma'am.

So I won’t bother today, because you knew that already.

- Oh thank you as well, bye and stay well.

Although I don’t think I’d mentioned the rubbish before.

Another thing it's quite psychologically odd not seeing people faces, they say eyes are windows to the soul, that's OK but I need to see the whole face to know what a person is truly thinking, to see micro-expressions etc.

It’s called multi-tasking.

Very odd, as if I landed on a different planet.

“More deaths than in China”, squawks the headline.

Everything?

738 dead in Spain in one day alone (have they got that right?), Italy 6,800, Spain 3,434, China 3,281.

Doesn't make much sense to shut everything down with no notice.

Forget the GDP rankings – now we’re down to coffin-counting.

Hospitals too?

The main picture, in fact, is four chaps in white suits lowering a coffin into a grave in Vitoria.

Those in the know will have nipped out just ahead of the order, to stock up at the supermarkets and the pharmacies, of course.

All good pre-breakfast stuff.

. Mar 25

And a little plug for the local authorities down below: the Diputaciones (provincial councils) have been more flexible than the state in tax deferral.

No, I think hospitals are still running, at least the one where few dozen coronavirus patients are being treated.

Well, that’s a relief.

But other than hospitals, yes, everything. I find it unbelievable too.

A tax relief, in fact. I feel better already.

Shops were closed at 2:30 p.m. and the announcement was made in the evening.

Busied myself with the post-return cleaning.

Not even given a chance of panic-buying.

Washed my gloved hands thoroughly.

Maybe some people indeed knew beforehand, the privileged few.

Took them off and washed the insides, and left them out to dry.

I don't think they need to worry about supplies, though.

Put bleach on a cloth and then washed down door handles, the gas heating button, this computer and, er, the keyboard … (oh, bugger, just a minute … there, done now), my keys to the door, even the two 20 euro coins in change I’d been given and had put in my breast pocket (difficult getting stuff out of your trouser pockets with latex gloves on, isn’t it?), and I even gave the newspaper a wipe where I’d touched it, for God’s sake …

I agree with you. I'm afraid burglars now have a carpe diem mentality.

Finally I stood there going through it all in my head, checking it all off, and I’d dealt with everything this bloody virus might have touched.

I've been living in Mauritius for a few months.

Suddenly I realised there was one thing it had touched that I could do nothing about: my soul.

Not until today did I feel the need to look up the emergency numbers.

Did you like that?

Since the first cases, I've noticed a change in people's behaviour.

The soul bit, I mean.

They are more, well, passionate. I know several people here had their houses broken in, one by men armed with machetes.

Quite dramatic, I thought. It’s like one of David Caruso’s lines.

Where I live is not a rich ghetto.

In CSI Miami, you know. Nobody can do the cool sunglasses routine like David Caruso.

Still, I'm cautious.

Sure, the ambiance of those Gucci forensic gloves and special Armani lab goggles helps, like Miami Vice updated to the 21st century, but he’s the big star for that reason only, and although the other CSI boss men, little Gary Siniese in New York and chubby Paul Guilfoyle in Las Vegas, have to wear lab coats every so often, you’ll never see Caruso in a white coat.

Gabriella Vento

They say it’s in his contract.

Local time: 13:52

No lab coats.

English to Hungarian

Just the sunglasses.

Great summary!

Nobody can do shades as coolly as David Caruso can.

Just one thing has been left out: build a (closer) bond with your children

Other actors learn their lines, but David Caruso just stands in front of his bathroom mirror for a few hours every day slowly taking those shades off and putting them on again.

They blend a couple of Caruso trademarks and lines into a whole routine.

ph-b wrote:

For instance, there he is with his hands crossed over his crotch looking down at the ground, always positioned skew-whiff to whoever he's talking to, occasionally raising his head a little to look at people or staring up at the sky, but mostly he concentrates on the ground all mysterious, and looks at everyone askance.

- If none available, pick a MOOC course,

And they give him these deadpan lines.

- Finish that crossword magazine bought in... 2018 (2/3rds to complete yet),

Somebody might say, for instance: “It’s a tough world out there for a 20-year old black kid, Horatio.”

- Design a new bed for the flower garden and look up forgotten traditional vegs for the veg patch.

He’s been staring up at the sky as this is said, and then he slowly takes off those shades (or slowly puts them on) and says:

Anything else?

“It’s a tough world out there for all of us, Alex.”

This was posted on LinkedIn yesterday

Or the suspect they’re questioning shouts: “I don’t care, see?

Heard a Dr. on TV say to get through the boredom of self-isolation we should finish things we start and thus have more calm in our lives.

You can’t prove a thing," and Caruso just puts on those goddamn shades of his, looks at him up and sideways and says: "You may care sooner than you know, Mister."

So I looked through the house to find all the things I've started but hadn't finished...so I finished off a bottle of Merlot, a bottle of Chardonnay, a bodle of Baileys, a butle of wum, tha mainder of Valiumun srciptuns, an a box a chocletz.

But that’s not all – as soon as he’s said these non sequiturs, he instantly walks off out of shot.

Yu haf no idr how feckin fablus I feel rite now.

Well, I say walk, but you watch next time.

Sned this to all who need inner piss.

I really don’t know how they do it.

Get a cat!

Either he's on a kind of trolley tied to a rope around his waist which somebody pulls to the side at the critical moment, or he doesn't actually walk, and just shifts his upper body to the side off-camera.

Another circulating theory:

It’s a mystery.

Cats are natural hosts of some types of CV (FCoV) with the genetic structure close to the current monster.

Like why women borrow your disposable razors and put them back with the plastic cap on, thinking you won’t notice.

It has never hurt human before and still does not.

And you don’t.

Not until you slice half your frigging cheek off the next day, and find the razor’s black with armpit hairs.

Not lethal for cats either.

Local time: 20:52

Therefore, cat owners have been subjected to "silent immunization", which could possibly make them more resistant to COVID-19.

Loved the soul bit!

Gosh, this is one theory I'd love to believe in.

Erika Ballardin

Even if not, still, get a cat.

Posted via

They will help you in your isolation a lot. In fact, this is a current trend in the US - to adopt or at least foster shelter pets.

ProZ.com Mobile

My only hope is that the same people will not be returning them back to shelters when the lockdown is over...

Maybe lockdown is working...

But at least that will save some cats from lab torture, since the first part of this theory is true.

After three days in a row the number of infected people "seems" to lower in Italy.

The news is spread with caution.

That's so funny!

IrinaN wrote: Another circulating theory:

The lockdown might be working...

@IrinaN - Cat burglars

It has never hurt human before and still does not. Not lethal for cats either.

It's like saying, I get a cold a couple of times a year so I've been subjected to "silent immunization" because the common cold viruses are also coronaviruses.

Breaking news – at least one hundred cats were stolen in a daring robbery last night at a well-known cattery outside Bilbao, presumably to be taken off and sold as furry Covid-19 deterrents on a burgeoning black cat market.

Or rather, a cat black market, as the animals targeted were not restricted to black cats only.

Somehow I think this can be safely locked away with all the other coronavirus myths.

My four dogs would probably make a cat's life difficult, but at least you have to go outside if you have dogs.

Details are still sketchy, but the feline booty apparently included Shorthairs, Longhairs, Wirehairs, Siamese, Norwegian Rex, Sphynx, Cornish Rex, in all sizes and colours.

Cattery employee Aintzane Iturriaga sobbed bitterly to camera following the large-scale pussy pilfering, pointing to row upon row of empty cages.

Thursday 26 March

...

Mar 26

Subscribe for the full story …

Kind of superfluous to tell you I went downstairs to get the paper and throw out the rubbish.

Local time: 21:29

So I won’t bother today, because you knew that already.

And finally ...

Although I don’t think I’d mentioned the rubbish before.

... because I've got to get down to a few KKK here, a walk down memory lane with P.G. Wodehouse's lovable toff, Mr Wooster:

It’s called multi-tasking.

Now, I was dashed if I could find that cane. The day had started just like any other, though. I tottered in to the morning room for breakfast at a quarter past eleven, quaffed some excellent Darjeeling and wolfed down a couple of wonderful kippers my man Jeeves had thoughtfully kept nice and warm in a covered receptacle, but as I was adjusting my monocle to have a look at Aunt Agatha's shares in the Daily Telegraph, ironed like the very dickens into a crease sharper than Balfour’s trousers, dammee if that bally cane hadn’t disappeared off the face of the earth.

“More deaths than in China”, squawks the headline.

I called in my man, the aforementioned Jeeves, for to tell you the truth I had an unconfirmed suspicion with regard to the cane. Jeeves appeared within seconds. It’s uncanny, you know. He's not the kind of chap who gets down on his knees to peep through the keyhole at the Wooster residence so as to be constantly on hand for the master, but he seems to have a kind of sixth sense that keeps him hovering close by permanently. It must be the way they train them at the Academy for Gentlemen's Gentlemen he attended down in the wilds of Surrey. A place called Coydon, or Croydon, or perhaps it was Coyldon. Who knows. Who cares, come to that. He shimmered closer, tray in hand, tall and imposing, not quite fully erect as the lower orders can never be, for they have to incline slightly at the shoulders, don’t you know, to indicate a certain amount of deference to their masters and the powers-that-be, but imposing nevertheless. He seems to move as if propelled by a small motor on the soles of those highly-polished shoes, too. Sometimes I cock my ears and listen as he approaches, to see if I can detect any pneumatic thingummajigs or hydraulic what-d’ye-call-thems at work, but no, the whole thing seems to be fully corporal. But I digress horridly here, so back to the point.

738 dead in Spain in one day alone (have they got that right?), Italy 6,800, Spain 3,434, China 3,281.

“That cane of mine seems to have disappeared, Jeeves,” I asked. “Have you seen it anywhere?"

Forget the GDP rankings – now we’re down to coffin-counting.

Now, Jeeves doesn’t actually raise his eyebrows, not as such, not anything that could actually be pinned down to a description of raising, no. He rarely shows expression. The blighter kind of wiggles them as only he can, and it was this eye-brow wiggling he availed himself of as he replied on this occasion:

“Your stick, sir?

The main picture, in fact, is four chaps in white suits lowering a coffin into a grave in Vitoria.

I took the liberty of putting it away, sir. In a wardrobe in the west wing. I’m afraid I did not realise you would be needing it.”

Stick. That word again. My bally suspicions were confirmed. Now, Jeeves has taste and Jeeves has class and Jeeves is the manservant par excellence, as Oofy Prosser is fond of saying down at the Drones Club – old Prosser has tried to pinch him off me more than once behind my back, and I am flattered and most relieved to say Jeeves has always refused, loyal old dog that he is – but when he gets a bee in his bonnet about certain things, he simply refuses to let it lie. It could be my choice of a waistcoat, it could be a natty hat I’ve picked up for a song, and for the last few weeks it had been this cane of mine. A gentleman’s gentleman cannot, of course, say these things outright, but Jeeves has his own little ways of making his displeasure apparent, and he had said that word “stick” a little too often lately for me not to notice. Jeeves did not appreciate my cane and had spirited it away to a place of safe custody, doubtless hoping I would forget about it.

All good pre-breakfast stuff.

Now, call me a silly and impressionable young upstart, but I had been thrilled with the new cane. So much so, I own I had gone straight home to show it off to Jeeves, and frankly I could sense the man's distaste from the word go.

And a little plug for the local authorities down below: the Diputaciones (provincial councils) have been more flexible than the state in tax deferral.

“Look at that shiny silver top with "BW“ engraved into it, Jeeves. BW. Bertie Wooster. Isn't that something?”

Well, that’s a relief.

My manservant was a little cool.

A tax relief, in fact. I feel better already.

“A most interesting … item, sir, I admit. Might I make so bold as to ask where the young master acquired his, ahem … stick?”

Busied myself with the post-return cleaning.

“Cane, Jeeves, it’s a cane," I rapped. “And that’s the best thing about it. I didn’t buy it. It’s a present from little Daphne, bless the girl. Absolutely spiffing, don’t you know.”

Washed my gloved hands thoroughly.

I was beaming at the cane as I said this, so I couldn’t actually see how he took it, but I did feel a certain stiffening in the atmosphere. A chilliness, one might say. And I knew he knew where I’d got it, too, before I told him. The question had been a blind. As a rule Jeeves never approves of my lady friends, but it was obvious he had observed imminent danger in this one. Do you know, at the very outset the blighter had even gone so far as to say he had an acquaintance who used to work for Pinkerton’s, if I wanted to “ascertain the background of the young lady in question”, as he put it.

Took them off and washed the insides, and left them out to dry.

As you can imagine, we Woosters don’t hold with that sort of caddish talk concerning the object of our affections, and I told him so in no uncertain terms. He retired hurt, and he had good reason, too. I was so taken with this little darling. We had only known each other a few months since a cocktail party at the Bassington-Ffrench's pad in Shropshire, and, while I hadn't actually folded her in my arms and popped the question yet, decorum prevailing, I knew it was only a matter of time. Bertie Wooster was in love, right in it, wallowing in it, wading in it up to the neck, drowning in it and then some, as I believe they say in certain parts of Brooklyn. And Jeeves knew that, too.

Put bleach on a cloth and then washed down door handles, the gas heating button, this computer and, er, the keyboard … (oh, bugger, just a minute … there, done now), my keys to the door, even the two 20 euro coins in change I’d been given and had put in my breast pocket (difficult getting stuff out of your trouser pockets with latex gloves on, isn’t it?), and I even gave the newspaper a wipe where I’d touched it, for God’s sake …

Still, one has to be firm with the great unwashed, I thought. Got to thump them back into line before they start getting ideas above their station.

Finally I stood there going through it all in my head, checking it all off, and I’d dealt with everything this bloody virus might have touched.

“It’s a cane, Jeeves,” I repeated sternly. “The word is cane. Not stick. It’s a cane. C-A-N-E, cane. Now go and get said cane, will you, there's a good fellow. I'm due at the Drones in an hour."

Suddenly I realised there was one thing it had touched that I could do nothing about: my soul.

He shimmied off dutifully, but left the rebellious atmosphere behind, hanging around like an unpleasant shroud.

A few days later I was happily toying with a whisky and soda in the library when the telephone rang. Had to answer it myself, a dashed nuisance, for that morning Jeeves had suddenly asked me to change his afternoon off for an important sally of his. Very polite about it he was, as was his wont, but I suspected he was still feeling sore about the Cane & Girl histoire, and this was his way of passively showing his discontent.

Did you like that?

“Wooster Residence,” I said grandly into the instrument.

The soul bit, I mean.

I could hardly hear the voice at the other end. Blow me if it wasn’t like the chap was whispering hoarsely into a handkerchief:

Quite dramatic, I thought. It’s like one of David Caruso’s lines.

“Wooster?

In CSI Miami, you know. Nobody can do the cool sunglasses routine like David Caruso.

That girl of yours, guv’. The one that’s been over a few motor car bonnets. Round a few corners, so to speak.”

Sure, the ambiance of those Gucci forensic gloves and special Armani lab goggles helps, like Miami Vice updated to the 21st century, but he’s the big star for that reason only, and although the other CSI boss men, little Gary Siniese in New York and chubby Paul Guilfoyle in Las Vegas, have to wear lab coats every so often, you’ll never see Caruso in a white coat.

“What?” I spluttered. “Who the devil is this?

They say it’s in his contract.

Do you mean Daphne, sir?

No lab coats.

How dare you, you absolute bounder?

Just the sunglasses.

What do you mean by it?

Nobody can do shades as coolly as David Caruso can.

Of all the dashed …”

Other actors learn their lines, but David Caruso just stands in front of his bathroom mirror for a few hours every day slowly taking those shades off and putting them on again.

“Save it, moosh. Stow it. She’s in trouble, and that’s all you need to know. Better get yourself down to the Dog and Duck in Belgravia at the double if you want to sort things out.”

They blend a couple of Caruso trademarks and lines into a whole routine.

“Hello, hello?

For instance, there he is with his hands crossed over his crotch looking down at the ground, always positioned skew-whiff to whoever he's talking to, occasionally raising his head a little to look at people or staring up at the sky, but mostly he concentrates on the ground all mysterious, and looks at everyone askance.

Who is this?” I demanded to know again. But that was all.

And they give him these deadpan lines.

It was all I needed to know, too. My damsel was in distress and I had to save her.

Somebody might say, for instance: “It’s a tough world out there for a 20-year old black kid, Horatio.”

I pulled on my hat and coat. Couldn’t find the cane, though. “That cad Jeeves again,", I thought, but it was hardly important, and so I rushed out to find a cab.

He’s been staring up at the sky as this is said, and then he slowly takes off those shades (or slowly puts them on) and says:

“Step on the gas,” I told the driver as we weaved through the London traffic, working myself deeper into my Sam Spade role by the minute. “There’s a guinea for you if you can get me there in ten minutes."

“It’s a tough world out there for all of us, Alex.”

Well, the chap drove like a genuine hero, and it wasn’t long before I was striding purposefully into the Dog and Duck. There weren’t many people in there, but I could just see dear little Daphne’s bobtail at the edge of one of the booths at the back. I was jolly well about to dive into whatever fray there might be, when through the glass screen in the next cubicle to my horror I saw her lean over and drape her arms over some man sitting next to her. I caught my breath as I tiptoed over and sat around the screen where I could hear them. It still makes the Wooster blood boil to think of it again, but this is what I heard:

Or the suspect they’re questioning shouts: “I don’t care, see?

“Oh, you are a one, you are, Tom Perkins," I heard as she backed out of a lingering bouche-à-bouche. “Stop fretting so. There’s nothing to worry about. The Wooster’s about to fall for it. I have the idiot eating out of my hand, especially since I gave him that rotten old stick you stole from that old fool Bartholomew Woolworth at the garden fête in Peckham. The initials worked a treat.”

You can’t prove a thing," and Caruso just puts on those goddamn shades of his, looks at him up and sideways and says: "You may care sooner than you know, Mister."

“Bartholomew Woolworth,” I breathed, aghast. “BW. The scheming little …”

But that’s not all – as soon as he’s said these non sequiturs, he instantly walks off out of shot.

Her companion seemed a mite grumpy. He wasn’t convinced.

Well, I say walk, but you watch next time.

“How long’s it going to be before we can get our hands on some of that money?” he griped.

I really don’t know how they do it.

“Tom, Tom my love, I'm sure he's going to pop the question any day now. Then, just as soon as I have that ring on my finger, I'll walk him up the aisle before you can say diamonds are a girl’s best friend. Then we can do what we like, and if he wants to divorce me it'll cost him, I can tell you. I’ll get at least half his sponduliks, and we can clear out to New York or wherever we want. It’s in the bag, really it is.”

Either he's on a kind of trolley tied to a rope around his waist which somebody pulls to the side at the critical moment, or he doesn't actually walk, and just shifts his upper body to the side off-camera.

I crept out of the bar, crept into a cab, and crept back home. I was creeping around the lounge when Jeeves came in.

It’s a mystery.

“Hullo Jeeves,” I said miserably. “Had a good afternoon off?

Like why women borrow your disposable razors and put them back with the plastic cap on, thinking you won’t notice.

Hopefully it was better than mine.”

And you don’t.

“Very good, sir, thank you, sir. I had a very agreeable afternoon indeed with an … an acquaintance of mine, sir. I believe I mentioned him to you the other day, sir."

Not until you slice half your frigging cheek off the next day, and find the razor’s black with armpit hairs.

There was something about the way the cove said it that made me look up.

Local time: 20:52

“Is there anything I can get you, sir?"

Loved the soul bit!

“No Jeeves." I thought for a minute. “Oh, but there is something you can do for me. Go and find that stick of mine and burn it. Burn it to a cinder and throw the ashes to the four winds afterwards, will you?

Erika Ballardin

I never want to see the blasted thing again."

Posted via

“Your cane, sir?" I couldn't tell whether the blighter's face showed triumph or surprise.

ProZ.com Mobile

“No, Jeeves. Not the cane. The stick. S-T-I-C-K, stick. Burn that stick.”

Maybe lockdown is working...

It was triumph, I could tell this time.

After three days in a row the number of infected people "seems" to lower in Italy.

“Very good, sir. Thank you, sir. Thank you.”

The news is spread with caution.

And, as he moved away to the door, I saw a crumpled handkerchief drop to the floor from his pocket.

The lockdown might be working...

“Jeeves.”

@IrinaN - Cat burglars

“Sir?”

Breaking news – at least one hundred cats were stolen in a daring robbery last night at a well-known cattery outside Bilbao, presumably to be taken off and sold as furry Covid-19 deterrents on a burgeoning black cat market.

“While you’re at it, you might step out and send a little wire to Miss Daphne telling her I’ve gone away. To France. Africa. Australia. Somewhere far away. The farther the better. For at least the next ten years, something like that.”

Or rather, a cat black market, as the animals targeted were not restricted to black cats only.

Could the beggar be smiling?

Details are still sketchy, but the feline booty apparently included Shorthairs, Longhairs, Wirehairs, Siamese, Norwegian Rex, Sphynx, Cornish Rex, in all sizes and colours.

It was so hard to tell.

Cattery employee Aintzane Iturriaga sobbed bitterly to camera following the large-scale pussy pilfering, pointing to row upon row of empty cages.

“I hope you will excuse me, sir, but I have already taken the liberty of doing so. I mentioned some urgent business over several years in Tuscany, sir. Thank you, sir.”

...

And, before the little motor propelled him doorwards, I spoke again:

Subscribe for the full story …

“And, Jeeves …”

Local time: 21:29

"Thank you, Jeeves. Well done, thou good and faithful servant and all that.”

And finally ...

He had the good grace to pretend not to have a bally clue what I was talking about, and allowed an air of vague perplexity to cross his features.

... because I've got to get down to a few KKK here, a walk down memory lane with P.G. Wodehouse's lovable toff, Mr Wooster:

“My pleasure, I’m sure, sir.”

Now, I was dashed if I could find that cane. The day had started just like any other, though. I tottered in to the morning room for breakfast at a quarter past eleven, quaffed some excellent Darjeeling and wolfed down a couple of wonderful kippers my man Jeeves had thoughtfully kept nice and warm in a covered receptacle, but as I was adjusting my monocle to have a look at Aunt Agatha's shares in the Daily Telegraph, ironed like the very dickens into a crease sharper than Balfour’s trousers, dammee if that bally cane hadn’t disappeared off the face of the earth.

Thanks Mervin

I called in my man, the aforementioned Jeeves, for to tell you the truth I had an unconfirmed suspicion with regard to the cane. Jeeves appeared within seconds. It’s uncanny, you know. He's not the kind of chap who gets down on his knees to peep through the keyhole at the Wooster residence so as to be constantly on hand for the master, but he seems to have a kind of sixth sense that keeps him hovering close by permanently. It must be the way they train them at the Academy for Gentlemen's Gentlemen he attended down in the wilds of Surrey. A place called Coydon, or Croydon, or perhaps it was Coyldon. Who knows. Who cares, come to that. He shimmered closer, tray in hand, tall and imposing, not quite fully erect as the lower orders can never be, for they have to incline slightly at the shoulders, don’t you know, to indicate a certain amount of deference to their masters and the powers-that-be, but imposing nevertheless. He seems to move as if propelled by a small motor on the soles of those highly-polished shoes, too. Sometimes I cock my ears and listen as he approaches, to see if I can detect any pneumatic thingummajigs or hydraulic what-d’ye-call-thems at work, but no, the whole thing seems to be fully corporal. But I digress horridly here, so back to the point.

Mar 27

“That cane of mine seems to have disappeared, Jeeves,” I asked. “Have you seen it anywhere?"

Your diary makes my quarantine so much nicer!

Now, Jeeves doesn’t actually raise his eyebrows, not as such, not anything that could actually be pinned down to a description of raising, no. He rarely shows expression. The blighter kind of wiggles them as only he can, and it was this eye-brow wiggling he availed himself of as he replied on this occasion:

Local time: 14:29

“Your stick, sir?

Make your own face masks

I took the liberty of putting it away, sir. In a wardrobe in the west wing. I’m afraid I did not realise you would be needing it.”

The President of the German Medical Association (Bundesärztekammer) is appealing for everybody to wear simple face masks when they're outside the home. Press release (in German):

Stick. That word again. My bally suspicions were confirmed. Now, Jeeves has taste and Jeeves has class and Jeeves is the manservant par excellence, as Oofy Prosser is fond of saying down at the Drones Club – old Prosser has tried to pinch him off me more than once behind my back, and I am flattered and most relieved to say Jeeves has always refused, loyal old dog that he is – but when he gets a bee in his bonnet about certain things, he simply refuses to let it lie. It could be my choice of a waistcoat, it could be a natty hat I’ve picked up for a song, and for the last few weeks it had been this cane of mine. A gentleman’s gentleman cannot, of course, say these things outright, but Jeeves has his own little ways of making his displeasure apparent, and he had said that word “stick” a little too often lately for me not to notice. Jeeves did not appreciate my cane and had spirited it away to a place of safe custody, doubtless hoping I would forget about it.

https://www.bundesaerztekammer.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/news-detail/reinhardt-raet-zum-tragen-von-einfachen-schutzmasken/

Now, call me a silly and impressionable young upstart, but I had been thrilled with the new cane. So much so, I own I had gone straight home to show it off to Jeeves, and frankly I could sense the man's distaste from the word go.

On-the-fly translation:

“Look at that shiny silver top with "BW“ engraved into it, Jeeves. BW. Bertie Wooster. Isn't that something?”

"Even wearing simple masks can help curb the spread of the coronavirus"... Simple masks made from cotton or other materials are just a workaround, but they're better than nothing, he said. "My advice is to get hold of simple masks or make them yourself and wear them whenever you're in public spaces. Masks like this can't guarantee that you won't get infected, but they can help a bit to reduce the risk of infecting other people or getting infected yourself."

My manservant was a little cool.

He then goes on to say that people should not use or buy professional masks, which must be reserved for patients and healthcare workers only.

“A most interesting … item, sir, I admit. Might I make so bold as to ask where the young master acquired his, ahem … stick?”

We should all follow this advice, wherever we live. Anything and everything that helps cut the spread of the virus at this critical time is worth doing.

“Cane, Jeeves, it’s a cane," I rapped. “And that’s the best thing about it. I didn’t buy it. It’s a present from little Daphne, bless the girl. Absolutely spiffing, don’t you know.”

#Keepcalmandsewmasks #Atamemberssewingmasks

I was beaming at the cane as I said this, so I couldn’t actually see how he took it, but I did feel a certain stiffening in the atmosphere. A chilliness, one might say. And I knew he knew where I’d got it, too, before I told him. The question had been a blind. As a rule Jeeves never approves of my lady friends, but it was obvious he had observed imminent danger in this one. Do you know, at the very outset the blighter had even gone so far as to say he had an acquaintance who used to work for Pinkerton’s, if I wanted to “ascertain the background of the young lady in question”, as he put it.

Friday 27 March

As you can imagine, we Woosters don’t hold with that sort of caddish talk concerning the object of our affections, and I told him so in no uncertain terms. He retired hurt, and he had good reason, too. I was so taken with this little darling. We had only known each other a few months since a cocktail party at the Bassington-Ffrench's pad in Shropshire, and, while I hadn't actually folded her in my arms and popped the question yet, decorum prevailing, I knew it was only a matter of time. Bertie Wooster was in love, right in it, wallowing in it, wading in it up to the neck, drowning in it and then some, as I believe they say in certain parts of Brooklyn. And Jeeves knew that, too.

“Government bought faulty coronavirus tests from unlicensed Chinese company”, thundered the headline in the rag this morning. It had to come. PM Sánchez’s hair is getting greyer by the day, and he’s only just turned 48 (technically, he's actually only 12 years old - born on 29 February 1972). The moaners and groaners in the opposition moaned and groaned that he had dragged his feet and, now he’s up and running, after going through the usual motions of pledging their support, they’re out for blood.

Still, one has to be firm with the great unwashed, I thought. Got to thump them back into line before they start getting ideas above their station.

Down to El Corte Inglés to get in the goodies for the weekend. Only one escalator up now, and only one down, and not in the same area of the store either. And only two of the three entrances operational. The two-metre separation criterion meant that I started the queue right back near the end of the cheese ‘n’ cold meats counter. Not that that means anything to most of you, but suffice it to say that it’s a much longer distance than something very long indeed.

“It’s a cane, Jeeves,” I repeated sternly. “The word is cane. Not stick. It’s a cane. C-A-N-E, cane. Now go and get said cane, will you, there's a good fellow. I'm due at the Drones in an hour."

I’m fed up washing and cleaning afterwards, let me tell you. I washed all the plastic and tinfoil bits and pieces used to wrap up the ham and turkey and cheese, the Cornflakes packet, the plastic wrapping on the mozzarella, and even the cardboard around the beers, anything the employees’ corona-infested gloved hands, the cashier’s corona-infested gloved hands and my own corona-infested gloved hands had touched. Then I found I had to wash my hands again before I put all the meat and cheese into the tupperware containers in the kitchen, and then I picked up my big shopping bag where I’d put all this to put it away, found I’d forgotten to clean its bloody handles, cleaned them, washed my hands again and … then I remembered I had to go back down to the fruit and veg shop too. FFS ...

He shimmied off dutifully, but left the rebellious atmosphere behind, hanging around like an unpleasant shroud.

They reckon we’ll be out and about again by May. June, more like. Although Donald reckons the US will be back to work by Easter. By June he’ll be telling us that the original announcement was fake news on fake media by a fake Donald Trump. Jeez.

A few days later I was happily toying with a whisky and soda in the library when the telephone rang. Had to answer it myself, a dashed nuisance, for that morning Jeeves had suddenly asked me to change his afternoon off for an important sally of his. Very polite about it he was, as was his wont, but I suspected he was still feeling sore about the Cane & Girl histoire, and this was his way of passively showing his discontent.

Have a good weekend!!

“Wooster Residence,” I said grandly into the instrument.

Local time: 23:29

I could hardly hear the voice at the other end. Blow me if it wasn’t like the chap was whispering hoarsely into a handkerchief:

April Fool's Day

“Wooster?

Mar 28

That girl of yours, guv’. The one that’s been over a few motor car bonnets. Round a few corners, so to speak.”

The Mauritian PM said last evening that shops would reopen on 1 April. Today is the third day of this extreme lockdown. Three online shops are supposedly still operating. Practically everything in these shops is sold out, though. What are you going to do with just olive oil, I wonder?

“What?” I spluttered. “Who the devil is this?

Make a tree leaf salad?

Do you mean Daphne, sir?

In one of my friends' area, some households hang red flags outside their houses to signify their hunger.

How dare you, you absolute bounder?

'Who will come to their rescue?' I asked.

What do you mean by it?

'Don't know,' she answered.

Of all the dashed …”

I hate to imagine the guaranteed chaos on 1 April. But who knows?

“Save it, moosh. Stow it. She’s in trouble, and that’s all you need to know. Better get yourself down to the Dog and Duck in Belgravia at the double if you want to sort things out.”

Because of the obvious food shortage, maybe the lockdown will be extended. Luckily, there are trees in the garden. Tree leaves in abundance.

“Hello, hello?

I would like to thank you, Mervyn, for starting this post and your contribution to it. It's comforting to have a space to share our experiences amid this havoc.

Who is this?” I demanded to know again. But that was all.

Stay safe and stay strong!

It was all I needed to know, too. My damsel was in distress and I had to save her.

jyuan\_us

I pulled on my hat and coat. Couldn’t find the cane, though. “That cad Jeeves again,", I thought, but it was hardly important, and so I rushed out to find a cab.

Local time: 15:29

“Step on the gas,” I told the driver as we weaved through the London traffic, working myself deeper into my Sam Spade role by the minute. “There’s a guinea for you if you can get me there in ten minutes."

Member (2005)

Well, the chap drove like a genuine hero, and it wasn’t long before I was striding purposefully into the Dog and Duck. There weren’t many people in there, but I could just see dear little Daphne’s bobtail at the edge of one of the booths at the back. I was jolly well about to dive into whatever fray there might be, when through the glass screen in the next cubicle to my horror I saw her lean over and drape her arms over some man sitting next to her. I caught my breath as I tiptoed over and sat around the screen where I could hear them. It still makes the Wooster blood boil to think of it again, but this is what I heard:

Not wearing masks to protect against coronavirus is a ‘big mistake,’ top Chinese scientist says

“Oh, you are a one, you are, Tom Perkins," I heard as she backed out of a lingering bouche-à-bouche. “Stop fretting so. There’s nothing to worry about. The Wooster’s about to fall for it. I have the idiot eating out of my hand, especially since I gave him that rotten old stick you stole from that old fool Bartholomew Woolworth at the garden fête in Peckham. The initials worked a treat.”

https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/not-wearing-masks-protect-against-coronavirus-big-mistake-top-chinese-scientist-says

“Bartholomew Woolworth,” I breathed, aghast. “BW. The scheming little …”

Mad dogs and Englishmen

Her companion seemed a mite grumpy. He wasn’t convinced.

Hello all

“How long’s it going to be before we can get our hands on some of that money?” he griped.

Zibow, I must say I have much more sympathy for those that are hungry, then those that have Covid. Why, well because hunger is a terrible pain I can sympathise with. Our fair and noble Prime minister has gone down with the virus, this has already raised a frenzy of debate about the "rise of the immune". In a little while we will know if the PM is immune or not, but if he is immune that raises questions about the role of testing in identifying the immune, and their eventual role in the virus environment. I am sure you all have your thoughts about this, is it madness to accept the idea that your going to get Covid anyway no matter how many precautions you take. And some people are saying it may be better to get it early, so that you be part of the immune community and help get society back on its feet. Here for now we can still go food shopping in relative calm, but for how much longer?

“Tom, Tom my love, I'm sure he's going to pop the question any day now. Then, just as soon as I have that ring on my finger, I'll walk him up the aisle before you can say diamonds are a girl’s best friend. Then we can do what we like, and if he wants to divorce me it'll cost him, I can tell you. I’ll get at least half his sponduliks, and we can clear out to New York or wherever we want. It’s in the bag, really it is.”

Maybe next week it will be me with the red flag. Take care. B

I crept out of the bar, crept into a cab, and crept back home. I was creeping around the lounge when Jeeves came in.

Who wants to be the next guinea pig?

“Hullo Jeeves,” I said miserably. “Had a good afternoon off?

I find it mad to want to be the first one to get it to be immunized while hospitals are overcharged and there is neither tested medication nor vaccine. I for my part even if I would have to get it or to be immunized do not want to be in the first wave. Thank God, I have been accepted for the government emergency grant for lost earnings. For now i can see the next month a little less worried, only go out for shopping once a week and for the rest of the time only spend time at home or on my balcony. I have lots and lots of book to read to improve my translation skills.

Hopefully it was better than mine.”

Why has this thread disappeared from the homepage?

“Very good, sir, thank you, sir. I had a very agreeable afternoon indeed with an … an acquaintance of mine, sir. I believe I mentioned him to you the other day, sir."

Mar 30

There was something about the way the cove said it that made me look up.

(and also from "recent forum posts")?

“Is there anything I can get you, sir?"

At least I can find it only through the history in my browser...

“No Jeeves." I thought for a minute. “Oh, but there is something you can do for me. Go and find that stick of mine and burn it. Burn it to a cinder and throw the ashes to the four winds afterwards, will you?

Hoping everyone is fine.

I never want to see the blasted thing again."

Local time: 20:29

“Your cane, sir?" I couldn't tell whether the blighter's face showed triumph or surprise.

Where is the continuation of the current diary?

“No, Jeeves. Not the cane. The stick. S-T-I-C-K, stick. Burn that stick.”

Mar 31

It was triumph, I could tell this time.

I hope you had a good and safe weekend.

“Very good, sir. Thank you, sir. Thank you.”

Can you continue, please?

And, as he moved away to the door, I saw a crumpled handkerchief drop to the floor from his pocket.

I hope everyone is doing well.

“Jeeves.”

Tanja K

“Sir?”

It seems it has been moved

“While you’re at it, you might step out and send a little wire to Miss Daphne telling her I’ve gone away. To France. Africa. Australia. Somewhere far away. The farther the better. For at least the next ten years, something like that.”

Christel Zipfel wrote:

Could the beggar be smiling?

Try: customize - further customize forum posts - then check the box for 'Covid-19 outbreak' list on homepage

It was so hard to tell.

This brought the thread back for me, and couple of other toppics I hadn't known about

“I hope you will excuse me, sir, but I have already taken the liberty of doing so. I mentioned some urgent business over several years in Tuscany, sir. Thank you, sir.”

Wednesday 1 April ("White Rabbits", as they say in the UK on the 1st of the month - not sure why) Apr 1

And, before the little motor propelled him doorwards, I spoke again:

OK, I’ve been dragging my feet on the quarantine diary. Given the interlude, I was initially going to write a hands-on (well, hands off, but you know what I mean) “report from a hospital in Bilbao”, but decided against it. As an April Fool, see. The date, see?

“And, Jeeves …”

But, really, it’s not a laugh.

"Thank you, Jeeves. Well done, thou good and faithful servant and all that.”

Yes, it’s been a few days. I was woken up to it yesterday evening by Chris S writing in private (thanks Chris!). Reasons various, among which the corona struck a little too close for co... See more

He had the good grace to pretend not to have a bally clue what I was talking about, and allowed an air of vague perplexity to cross his features.

And finally (again):

“My pleasure, I’m sure, sir.”

Apr 1

Thanks Mervin

Me, I've got 6K and a few more K to be getting on with, so I'm afraid I have to leave you with this one, which should keep you going for a bit. If you've read it before, well, then you've read it before, so tough luck. If you haven't, prepare yourself for dénouement. A tragic tale of the dismal demise of a rollicking writer who fell from favour. In my version he goes out with a bang, and deservedly so too:

Mar 27

Hôtel d’Alsace,

Your diary makes my quarantine so much nicer!

Rue des Beaux-Arts, Paris

Local time: 14:29

29

Make your own face masks

November 1900

The President of the German Medical Association (Bundesärztekammer) is appealing for everybody to wear simple face masks when they're outside the home. Press release (in German):

My darling Mosie,

https://www.bundesaerztekammer.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/news-detail/reinhardt-raet-zum-tragen-von-einfachen-schutzmasken/

It has taken me some time to pen this, which is likely to be my last missive. As you know, it has been over three years since I shook the filthy dust of Reading Gaol from my feet and began my voluntary exile in France. And some five years since I arrived at Newgate Prison, and thence to Pentonville and Wandsworth.

On-the-fly translation:

I recall that the constable, a rough-looking creature so impossibly ugly it actually hurt my eyes to contemplate him, jeered as he led me from the dock:

"Even wearing simple masks can help curb the spread of the coronavirus"... Simple masks made from cotton or other materials are just a workaround, but they're better than nothing, he said. "My advice is to get hold of simple masks or make them yourself and wear them whenever you're in public spaces. Masks like this can't guarantee that you won't get infected, but they can help a bit to reduce the risk of infecting other people or getting infected yourself."

“Looks like you’se goin’ down for a few years, Wilde, you fackin’ Paddy queerboy.”

He then goes on to say that people should not use or buy professional masks, which must be reserved for patients and healthcare workers only.

Dear me, I almost fainted with the aggressive vulgarity of it all, but I simply could not let that pass. I fixed him with one of my special stares - you know, that baleful one I reserve for sneering straights, which makes them so nervous and drives them into silence, and stood with arms akimbo, wrists on my waist and fingers pointing outwards, head cocked on one side. Drama, Mosie, drama. Drama or nought.

We should all follow this advice, wherever we live. Anything and everything that helps cut the spread of the virus at this critical time is worth doing.

“Chief Superintendent”, I began sarcastically, “it so happens I have spent most of my adult life going down. I have turned it into an art form, in fact. You might say I have been there, done that, and got the two-tone pink weskit. I have partaken of every fruit in the orchard, my good man, including, like Adam and Eve, the Forbidden Fruit. Which, I might add, is the sweetest and most delicious fruit of all. Did you see that photographer as we left the dock, sir?

#Keepcalmandsewmasks #Atamemberssewingmasks

It was me he was photographing, not you, obviously. Do you wish to know why, my friend?

Friday 27 March

Because at the very least, Inspector, I have lived. I have lived life to the full. I have been wined and dined with such food and drink as you can only imagine at the best tables in London and the Home Counties, my plays and other works have been celebrated at theatres and publishing houses up and down the country, and I have had the great and the good hanging on my every word in the lounges of luxurious mansions of which you have never surveyed even the outside, let alone the interior, with the ladies giggling and blushing shyly behind their pretty fans, and the gentlemen scowling jealously at my easy wit and flamboyance and success with their dainty fillies, but grudgingly realising they must remain silent, powerless to match the master wordsmith in their midst.”

“Government bought faulty coronavirus tests from unlicensed Chinese company”, thundered the headline in the rag this morning. It had to come. PM Sánchez’s hair is getting greyer by the day, and he’s only just turned 48 (technically, he's actually only 12 years old - born on 29 February 1972). The moaners and groaners in the opposition moaned and groaned that he had dragged his feet and, now he’s up and running, after going through the usual motions of pledging their support, they’re out for blood.

“I admit I have made mistakes”, I went on. “All men make mistakes and they learn, as do all women. The difference between men and women in this regard is that men learn so exceedingly well that they are invariably capable of repeating their mistakes in exactly the same way.”

Down to El Corte Inglés to get in the goodies for the weekend. Only one escalator up now, and only one down, and not in the same area of the store either. And only two of the three entrances operational. The two-metre separation criterion meant that I started the queue right back near the end of the cheese ‘n’ cold meats counter. Not that that means anything to most of you, but suffice it to say that it’s a much longer distance than something very long indeed.

I had the bounder under my spell, Mosie. His eyes bored into me.

I’m fed up washing and cleaning afterwards, let me tell you. I washed all the plastic and tinfoil bits and pieces used to wrap up the ham and turkey and cheese, the Cornflakes packet, the plastic wrapping on the mozzarella, and even the cardboard around the beers, anything the employees’ corona-infested gloved hands, the cashier’s corona-infested gloved hands and my own corona-infested gloved hands had touched. Then I found I had to wash my hands again before I put all the meat and cheese into the tupperware containers in the kitchen, and then I picked up my big shopping bag where I’d put all this to put it away, found I’d forgotten to clean its bloody handles, cleaned them, washed my hands again and … then I remembered I had to go back down to the fruit and veg shop too. FFS ...

“So, Sergeant”, I challenged him, “that has been my life. Now tell me about your own life. Tell me about those jolly evenings of yours after work at the Dog and Duck, swilling the vile otter’s urine that passes for ale there with your cronies. Your idea of merriment and wit is doubtless to break wind loudly as a comely wench sets down those foaming chipped glasses on the rickety table, treating her to a gratuitous whiff of your foul breath as you stare brazenly at the generous bosom jiggling temptingly beneath the white blouse and slur boozily, “If you’re sellin’ the puppies, Margie, I’ll give those pink-nosed beauties a good ‘ome, you see if I don’t, hur-hur-hur”. And later you wend your way back to the drab tumbledown hovel of a place you call home in the East End, heavy with the hum of the rotting corpses of dogs, cats, drunkards, beggars, streetwalkers and poor unwanted newly born infants rising up from the dark dank depths of the River Thames. Walking into the bedroom of that wretched abode your nostrils wrinkle, detecting the most nauseous flatulence, and there you find your lassie snoring her head off, in curlers, with her teeth in a dirty glass on the bedside table in a dreadful space so tiny there is no room to swing a mouse, never mind a cat. Yes, your unlovely lady. You know, in my heyday the audience included ladies who were inevitably overtaken by age, but they used their money and their power to purchase the best clothes and other accoutrements to conceal the passage of time as best they could. What unkind tongues might call “mutton dressed as lamb”, but for the female half of your luckless, loveless, lustless marriage it is simply a helpless, hapless, hopeless case of mutton dressed as mutton. You therefore decide to repair to a cold outside toilet for a short solo session to satisfy your pent-up baser urges, peering downwards into the grimy, heavily skidmarked underwear around your ankles, having had the foresight to plan ahead and keep an image in your mind’s eye of Margie’s quivering appendages to bring things nicely to fruition. Oh, and have you and her indoors been blessed with parenthood, Officer?

They reckon we’ll be out and about again by May. June, more like. Although Donald reckons the US will be back to work by Easter. By June he’ll be telling us that the original announcement was fake news on fake media by a fake Donald Trump. Jeez.

A grunting herd of unruly, ill-mannered, inadequate inarticulate brats, mayhap, with the bleakest of futures before them, their only prospects being to join Mr Peel’s Finest and thus follow in their father’s footsteps or, better still, to enlist in the armed forces and have the splendid opportunity of travelling the world, meeting all kinds of people from different countries and cultures, and savagely bayoneting them to death in the sovereign name of Tricky Vicky, or Steady Eddie or whichever tiresome, arrogant handlebar-moustached oafish buffoon succeeds her on the throne of this green and pleasant land - which must surely be some time soon.”

Have a good weekend!!

“Yes, Constable”, I rapped, “That is the man you are - “A Man of No Importance”. I realise that the adroit reference in the five words I have just pronounced is lost on you now, and indeed shall be always, and I instantly regret having literally wasted my time by uttering them to you.”

Local time: 23:29

I moved into position for the kill, shaking my head gently from side to side, head bowed. Then I raised it slowly, eyelids half-closed at first, and then suddenly opened them wide as I looked into his repellent features. Always theatrical, Mosie, theatrical or die:

April Fool's Day

“Yes, my good fellow, I am going to gaol tonight, but so are you. You shall go to a different kind of gaol, perhaps, but you are just as much a prisoner in your own private hellhole as I shall be. More so, in fact, because after all, I have been sentenced to only two years’ hard labour, and one day I shall have paid my debt to society and shall be released from the services of the State, whereas you have been sentenced to life, my friend, and I swear by all that is holy that you shall serve every single sad and sorry second.”

Mar 28

Do you know, sweet Mosie, I fancied I saw a little tear or two travelling down his cheek as he pushed me down the stairs and proceeded to kick the living daylights out of me. Violence, violence, it is the only language the lower orders understand ...

The Mauritian PM said last evening that shops would reopen on 1 April. Today is the third day of this extreme lockdown. Three online shops are supposedly still operating. Practically everything in these shops is sold out, though. What are you going to do with just olive oil, I wonder?

But, like that policeman, the only recipients of my words now make it all a waste of time. Farewell to the rousing applause. Adieu to all those packed West End drawing rooms. My theatre, hitherto full of cheery, happy faces, lit by dozens of fine chandeliers all around and alive with row upon row of ripples of laughter, is now only full of empty seats, dark as night, and silent as the grave, and I walk my deserted stage alone, driving my boots down especially hard as I do so in the desperate hope that the sharp echo of my footsteps on the boards shall drown out the cruel catcalls and merciless booing I hear in my head ...

Make a tree leaf salad?

I left Reading with that huge essay I was telling you about, the tortuous gloomy reflections of a young Irishman wracked with pain, smitten with the love that dare not speak its name for a member of the upper échelons of Albion’s high society. My publisher insisted on changing the name, however:

In one of my friends' area, some households hang red flags outside their houses to signify their hunger.

“Don’t be a fool, Oscar”, he warned me, “we can’t possibly bring it out as “Me and My Nob”.

'Who will come to their rescue?' I asked.

“You are quite right”, I said. “It should properly be, of course, “My Nob and I”.

'Don't know,' she answered.

“No, no”, he sighed, “what I mean is the censors will be down on us like a ton of bricks from the word go.”

I hate to imagine the guaranteed chaos on 1 April. But who knows?

And so he plumped for “De Profundis”. A bit lame, I thought.

Because of the obvious food shortage, maybe the lockdown will be extended. Luckily, there are trees in the garden. Tree leaves in abundance.

But why write or speak at all if it is not appreciated?

I would like to thank you, Mervyn, for starting this post and your contribution to it. It's comforting to have a space to share our experiences amid this havoc.

Let me give you an example. In the first few days here in Paris, I got talking to a little Dubliner playing the violin outside Gare St Lazare. He offered to play a tune just for me, don’t you know. A famous melody, which instantly brought me back to the rolling hills and lakes of County Fermanagh I frolicked around when Mamma sent me to Portora Royal in Enniskillen to make a man of me. And make a man of me it did. O Mosie, such memories, playing with the big boys’ conkers behind the bicycle shed ...

Stay safe and stay strong!

“Oi tink ye’ll be knowin’ da Londonderry Air, so ye will, sorr,” said my violinist when he’d finished.

jyuan\_us

O, thank the Lord I was born in a respectable part of Dublin and studied at places such as Portora and Trinity College. Imagine the chagrin of having to speak like that all the time. And the name, Mosie, his given name!

Local time: 15:29

Seamus O’Sheugh. Heavens, I feel grubby just writing it, let alone saying it.

Member (2005)

“Oh yes, the Londonderry Air. Naturally I am acquainted with it, my dear Seamus”, I simpered, “I have been intimate with many a London derrière, believe you me, but one of my main reasons for travelling here is to take a closer look at the Paris variety. Woo, woo!”

Not wearing masks to protect against coronavirus is a ‘big mistake,’ top Chinese scientist says

But damme if the confounded nincompoop merely looked at me blankly with knitted brows. The lights were on, but nobody home. Not a hint of a reaction. Pearls before swine, or I never saw it.

https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/not-wearing-masks-protect-against-coronavirus-big-mistake-top-chinese-scientist-says

Nevertheless, despite his horrendous name, atrocious diction and dullness of intellect, Seamus was quite the gentleman (and a closet case, I suspect), and helped me out in all sorts of little ways. He assisted in getting me rooms and showed me around Paris. He also took me to a darling club in one of those seedy streets around Pigalle, “Les Garçons”, where there was nary a woman to be seen, apart from the owner, a rather severe-looking lady with close-cropped hair.

Mad dogs and Englishmen

“She bats for de udder soide, Mister Woilde”, Seamus whispered to me at the bar.

Hello all

I decided to take this as a fresh opportunity, and so I tried again:

Zibow, I must say I have much more sympathy for those that are hungry, then those that have Covid. Why, well because hunger is a terrible pain I can sympathise with. Our fair and noble Prime minister has gone down with the virus, this has already raised a frenzy of debate about the "rise of the immune". In a little while we will know if the PM is immune or not, but if he is immune that raises questions about the role of testing in identifying the immune, and their eventual role in the virus environment. I am sure you all have your thoughts about this, is it madness to accept the idea that your going to get Covid anyway no matter how many precautions you take. And some people are saying it may be better to get it early, so that you be part of the immune community and help get society back on its feet. Here for now we can still go food shopping in relative calm, but for how much longer?

“Well”, I quipped, “if she bats for the other side, she may also have bowled many a maiden over. Woo, woo!”

Maybe next week it will be me with the red flag. Take care. B

The man just stood there looking at me quizzically. For God’s sake …

Who wants to be the next guinea pig?

“A maiden over”, I repeated, helplessly. “You know. Maiden – maiden over. As in cricket. And, er … knocked her for six on a deliciously wet sticky wicket, perhaps … er, howzat?”

I find it mad to want to be the first one to get it to be immunized while hospitals are overcharged and there is neither tested medication nor vaccine. I for my part even if I would have to get it or to be immunized do not want to be in the first wave. Thank God, I have been accepted for the government emergency grant for lost earnings. For now i can see the next month a little less worried, only go out for shopping once a week and for the rest of the time only spend time at home or on my balcony. I have lots and lots of book to read to improve my translation skills.

“How’s what, sorr?” was all he said, so I let it lie.

Why has this thread disappeared from the homepage?

The sign outside “Les Garçons” was rather naughtily tongue-in-cheek, I thought – it said “Members Only”. Smiling devilishly, I had just opened my mouth to address Seamus on the subject in jest, but I closed it again because I was rapidly coming to the conclusion there was little point in such an enterprise with the likes of Mr O’Sheugh.

Mar 30

Considering the ghastly murders in Whitechapel a few years ago, the stage name of the star turn at “Les Garçons” was in rather bad taste, but I suppose Jacques Le Stripper was as good a name as any for an entrepreneuse to pull in the crowds. Our Jacques was from the colonies, big and black as a badger’s bottom. He came on and stripped, and then danced and strutted around for a while totally naked. There was even a contest one night. We paid a few coins for a ticket to guess the weight of a particular part of his body – no prizes for guessing which, my boy - and the prize was none other than a tête-à-tête with its proud owner the following evening. After a while a bald man came out with a special set of elongated scales, and Jacques laid his monster out on them. What luck - mine was the closest guess at a whopping 12 ounces!

(and also from "recent forum posts")?

As for my winnings, I was anxious to avoid any scandals with M. le Juge, and in that regard I could not take any chances with my busybody landlady, who was always prowling around. I thus implored Jacques to be discreet when he arrived at my rooms, and the darling man complied wonderfully. He dutifully slipped in the tradesman’s entrance and came up my back passage. Woo, woo!

At least I can find it only through the history in my browser...

But that was some years ago, and now I am ill, dreadfully ill. Ill and practically penniless, and I feel the end is near. Ever since I moved to this mean little hotel, my wallpaper and I have been fighting a duel to the death, Mosie, and one of us has got to go.

Hoping everyone is fine.

The publisher was kind enough to send over a man to make some arrangements for me, but I am afraid to say that lately the only arrangements he is making are for my impending demise. The other day he was writing things down in a little book, and at one point enquired softly whether I would care to be placed in Père Lachaise cemetery when the time came.

Local time: 20:29

Prostrate on my horrid bed and hardly able to move, I gave him a weak little smile and proffered my thanks, but shook my head and told him I would not be seen dead in the place. Can you believe he actually wrote that down in his notebook, Mosie?

Where is the continuation of the current diary?

Bless the man, he also wanted to know what kind of casket I should prefer:

Mar 31

“There is the classic wooden variety, sir”, he told me, “although there are also versions made of specially strengthened kraft paper and other materials.”

I hope you had a good and safe weekend.

My breathing was very laboured by now, and I said very slowly:

Can you continue, please?

“My dear fellow, my frenzied past is littered with amorous encounters, but I have now reached the stage where I care very little whether I get wood or whether I do not get wood.”

I hope everyone is doing well.

Another of those puzzled looks, dearest Mosie. The end was coming fast, and frankly I was beginning to wish it would arrive a little faster. But no, there was even more disappreciation torture in store for me:

Tanja K

"And, er, Mr Wilde, would you like any music at the, er, event, sir?

It seems it has been moved

Something sober and appropriate … some, er, Gregorian chants, perhaps?”

Christel Zipfel wrote:

Lord knows, Mosie, I did my level witty best until the bitter end:

Try: customize - further customize forum posts - then check the box for 'Covid-19 outbreak' list on homepage

“Given the state of my finances, my good man”, I croaked, “chance’d be a fine thing.”

This brought the thread back for me, and couple of other toppics I hadn't known about

I then watched in utter disbelief as the fool nodded and repeated it slowly while writing it down, “All right, so that’s … Gregorian … chants … a … fine … thing. Got that, sir”.

Wednesday 1 April ("White Rabbits", as they say in the UK on the 1st of the month - not sure why) Apr 1

My time is up, Mosie. It is time for me to Meet my Maker. Love to you and the pretty boys always, and the last quip is for you, dear lad, for I am dying beyond my means. Woo … woo … woooooooo ….

OK, I’ve been dragging my feet on the quarantine diary. Given the interlude, I was initially going to write a hands-on (well, hands off, but you know what I mean) “report from a hospital in Bilbao”, but decided against it. As an April Fool, see. The date, see?

...

But, really, it’s not a laugh.

Thursday 2 April

Yes, it’s been a few days. I was woken up to it yesterday evening by Chris S writing in private (thanks Chris!). Reasons various, among which the corona struck a little too close for co... See more

Apr 2

And finally (again):

“Six residents dead and 35 infected at an old people’s home in Balmaseda”, sighs the headline in the rag. Are we still allowed to say “old people’s home”?

Apr 1

Or is it a home for the elderly?

Me, I've got 6K and a few more K to be getting on with, so I'm afraid I have to leave you with this one, which should keep you going for a bit. If you've read it before, well, then you've read it before, so tough luck. If you haven't, prepare yourself for dénouement. A tragic tale of the dismal demise of a rollicking writer who fell from favour. In my version he goes out with a bang, and deservedly so too:

Please don’t tell me it’s a third-age residence or something similar. Oh, I've got it now - "senior citizens' home". Don’t know about other countries, but up and down this one they all seem to be death traps for both residents and staff, whatever they're called. Balmaseda, incidentally, is famous for its re-enactment of the crucifixion at Easter, with a young bearded bloke tramping through the streets bearing his cross. Easter, of course, has been cancelled everywhere. No need for it – plenty of crosses already being borne around here. And it’s not just Pilate busy washing his hands either.

Hôtel d’Alsace,

And plenty of accusations too from Philistines and Pharisees in the corridors of power, but not many Samaritans to be seen. Again, I imagine it’s the same in other countries, but here after a period of grace amid solemn declarations … solidarity in this hour of need … we shall fight as one on our balconies … totally at the disposal of the government of the day … lighting a glimmering candle of hope [candle of hope?] … unswerving belief in the final victory … we shall fight as one in our lounges … putting aside individual interests for the common good … we shall fight as one in our kitchens … our day will come … we shall fight as one in our toilets … etc., it’s now business as usual for lawmakers and moaning minnies, and so shit-stirring is back on the agenda again.

Rue des Beaux-Arts, Paris

I don’t have so much work these days, but I do miss my cheerful secretary. Well, assistant, really. Yes, an assistant. She’s been with me for yonks now. Years back work was becoming too much for little me, so I put an ad in the paper, and among the candidates was Idoia. She arrived for interview at the office one troublesome afternoon. If you’ve heard this one before, by the way, just stop me …

29

“Good afternoon”, she smiled to me at the door. “My name’s Idoia. The interview for the assistant/secretary?”

November 1900

“Er yes, Miss, how are you”, I said, a little ruffled. “Er, it might be a little difficult to have the interview this afternoon. I’m usually well organised here, but I’ve got a problem with one of my more edgy neurotic busy-busy customers.”

My darling Mosie,

I meant Ander. Ander Uriarte. Ander Uriarte was the helpful kind who rings up every hour to check on how it’s going and remind you how important and non-negotiable the deadline is, and he had given me a text which, as I ploughed through it, turned out to be nightmarishly technical with format problems to boot, and to cut a long story short I wasn’t going to be able to make the deadline. You know that horrible sinking feeling, don’t you?

It has taken me some time to pen this, which is likely to be my last missive. As you know, it has been over three years since I shook the filthy dust of Reading Gaol from my feet and began my voluntary exile in France. And some five years since I arrived at Newgate Prison, and thence to Pentonville and Wandsworth.

“Busy-busy?” she said. “I know the type.”

I recall that the constable, a rough-looking creature so impossibly ugly it actually hurt my eyes to contemplate him, jeered as he led me from the dock:

As the phone rang and I saw Ander’s number on screen, I said to Idoia, “Bloody hell. Now I’m about to be made to feel two inches high, it’s 4 o’clock now, and I’ll never make it for 5 pm.”

“Looks like you’se goin’ down for a few years, Wilde, you fackin’ Paddy queerboy.”

“Don’t worry”, said Idoia, putting her handbag down on the table and taking off her gloves. “I’ll talk to him. These Anders don’t bother me. Call it a hands-on interview test if you like.”

Dear me, I almost fainted with the aggressive vulgarity of it all, but I simply could not let that pass. I fixed him with one of my special stares - you know, that baleful one I reserve for sneering straights, which makes them so nervous and drives them into silence, and stood with arms akimbo, wrists on my waist and fingers pointing outwards, head cocked on one side. Drama, Mosie, drama. Drama or nought.

”You?

“Chief Superintendent”, I began sarcastically, “it so happens I have spent most of my adult life going down. I have turned it into an art form, in fact. You might say I have been there, done that, and got the two-tone pink weskit. I have partaken of every fruit in the orchard, my good man, including, like Adam and Eve, the Forbidden Fruit. Which, I might add, is the sweetest and most delicious fruit of all. Did you see that photographer as we left the dock, sir?

But you don’t know anything about the job, or know him, either, or …”

It was me he was photographing, not you, obviously. Do you wish to know why, my friend?

“I don’t need to know anything”, said Idoia. “Leave it to me. Oh, by the way, is your grandmother still alive?”

Because at the very least, Inspector, I have lived. I have lived life to the full. I have been wined and dined with such food and drink as you can only imagine at the best tables in London and the Home Counties, my plays and other works have been celebrated at theatres and publishing houses up and down the country, and I have had the great and the good hanging on my every word in the lounges of luxurious mansions of which you have never surveyed even the outside, let alone the interior, with the ladies giggling and blushing shyly behind their pretty fans, and the gentlemen scowling jealously at my easy wit and flamboyance and success with their dainty fillies, but grudgingly realising they must remain silent, powerless to match the master wordsmith in their midst.”

“What?

“I admit I have made mistakes”, I went on. “All men make mistakes and they learn, as do all women. The difference between men and women in this regard is that men learn so exceedingly well that they are invariably capable of repeating their mistakes in exactly the same way.”

My grandmother?

I had the bounder under my spell, Mosie. His eyes bored into me.

What do you mean?

“So, Sergeant”, I challenged him, “that has been my life. Now tell me about your own life. Tell me about those jolly evenings of yours after work at the Dog and Duck, swilling the vile otter’s urine that passes for ale there with your cronies. Your idea of merriment and wit is doubtless to break wind loudly as a comely wench sets down those foaming chipped glasses on the rickety table, treating her to a gratuitous whiff of your foul breath as you stare brazenly at the generous bosom jiggling temptingly beneath the white blouse and slur boozily, “If you’re sellin’ the puppies, Margie, I’ll give those pink-nosed beauties a good ‘ome, you see if I don’t, hur-hur-hur”. And later you wend your way back to the drab tumbledown hovel of a place you call home in the East End, heavy with the hum of the rotting corpses of dogs, cats, drunkards, beggars, streetwalkers and poor unwanted newly born infants rising up from the dark dank depths of the River Thames. Walking into the bedroom of that wretched abode your nostrils wrinkle, detecting the most nauseous flatulence, and there you find your lassie snoring her head off, in curlers, with her teeth in a dirty glass on the bedside table in a dreadful space so tiny there is no room to swing a mouse, never mind a cat. Yes, your unlovely lady. You know, in my heyday the audience included ladies who were inevitably overtaken by age, but they used their money and their power to purchase the best clothes and other accoutrements to conceal the passage of time as best they could. What unkind tongues might call “mutton dressed as lamb”, but for the female half of your luckless, loveless, lustless marriage it is simply a helpless, hapless, hopeless case of mutton dressed as mutton. You therefore decide to repair to a cold outside toilet for a short solo session to satisfy your pent-up baser urges, peering downwards into the grimy, heavily skidmarked underwear around your ankles, having had the foresight to plan ahead and keep an image in your mind’s eye of Margie’s quivering appendages to bring things nicely to fruition. Oh, and have you and her indoors been blessed with parenthood, Officer?

No, she’s dead. Both of them are dead. Years ago, in Ireland. I hardly knew either of them. But what’s that got to do with –“

A grunting herd of unruly, ill-mannered, inadequate inarticulate brats, mayhap, with the bleakest of futures before them, their only prospects being to join Mr Peel’s Finest and thus follow in their father’s footsteps or, better still, to enlist in the armed forces and have the splendid opportunity of travelling the world, meeting all kinds of people from different countries and cultures, and savagely bayoneting them to death in the sovereign name of Tricky Vicky, or Steady Eddie or whichever tiresome, arrogant handlebar-moustached oafish buffoon succeeds her on the throne of this green and pleasant land - which must surely be some time soon.”

“That should make it a little easier for you, then”, she said mysteriously as she moved across to the phone.

“Yes, Constable”, I rapped, “That is the man you are - “A Man of No Importance”. I realise that the adroit reference in the five words I have just pronounced is lost on you now, and indeed shall be always, and I instantly regret having literally wasted my time by uttering them to you.”

She put the call on loudspeaker and we heard Ander say, “Hello, is Mervyn there, it’s about an urgent job, very urgent in fact, I just wanted to make sure it’ll be OK for 5, but really 4.30 would be better, or even 4.45. It’s urgent, you see, very urgent …”

I moved into position for the kill, shaking my head gently from side to side, head bowed. Then I raised it slowly, eyelids half-closed at first, and then suddenly opened them wide as I looked into his repellent features. Always theatrical, Mosie, theatrical or die:

Idoia smiled at me, mouthed “Urgent” to me, then stopped smiling before she spoke into the mouthpiece. “Oh hello Ander, good afternoon, this is Idoia. I’m afraid he’s not here at the moment. A really difficult day we’re having, and no mistake. … You didn’t know his grandmother died, did you?”

“Yes, my good fellow, I am going to gaol tonight, but so are you. You shall go to a different kind of gaol, perhaps, but you are just as much a prisoner in your own private hellhole as I shall be. More so, in fact, because after all, I have been sentenced to only two years’ hard labour, and one day I shall have paid my debt to society and shall be released from the services of the State, whereas you have been sentenced to life, my friend, and I swear by all that is holy that you shall serve every single sad and sorry second.”

!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Do you know, sweet Mosie, I fancied I saw a little tear or two travelling down his cheek as he pushed me down the stairs and proceeded to kick the living daylights out of me. Violence, violence, it is the only language the lower orders understand ...

I tried not to gasp, but my jaw dropped an inch or two, and I waved my hands at her, mouthing “No, no, no ….”

But, like that policeman, the only recipients of my words now make it all a waste of time. Farewell to the rousing applause. Adieu to all those packed West End drawing rooms. My theatre, hitherto full of cheery, happy faces, lit by dozens of fine chandeliers all around and alive with row upon row of ripples of laughter, is now only full of empty seats, dark as night, and silent as the grave, and I walk my deserted stage alone, driving my boots down especially hard as I do so in the desperate hope that the sharp echo of my footsteps on the boards shall drown out the cruel catcalls and merciless booing I hear in my head ...

But Ander had already gasped himself – “Oh no, I didn’t know, oh that’s dreadful”, we heard him say.

I left Reading with that huge essay I was telling you about, the tortuous gloomy reflections of a young Irishman wracked with pain, smitten with the love that dare not speak its name for a member of the upper échelons of Albion’s high society. My publisher insisted on changing the name, however:

“Yes”, said Idoia, “yes, she died. In Ireland. Very sad. He’s in a real tizzy today. And he can’t go to the funeral, of course.”

“Don’t be a fool, Oscar”, he warned me, “we can’t possibly bring it out as “Me and My Nob”.

Ander was aghast. “Oh no, oh no, this is terrible, how awful, oh, really, the job can wait, in fact, it’ll be OK tomorrow, or the next day even, it’s not actually that urgent at all, er, tell him I’m really sorry, won’t you, erm, Miss … erm?”

“You are quite right”, I said. “It should properly be, of course, “My Nob and I”.

”Idoia”, she said. “Idoia Belaustegigoitia Irigoyen. I’m just helping out on a skeleton basis today, but (she raised her eyebrows as she looked over at me) I may be around more permanently soon.”

“No, no”, he sighed, “what I mean is the censors will be down on us like a ton of bricks from the word go.”

She thanked Ander and came off the phone. “Well, you’ve got another day at least. OK?”

And so he plumped for “De Profundis”. A bit lame, I thought.

I was horrified. “But Miss, er, Idoia, how could you do such a thing, lying to him like that?”

But why write or speak at all if it is not appreciated?

“Pardon me, but I haven’t lied to anyone”, the girl said firmly.

Let me give you an example. In the first few days here in Paris, I got talking to a little Dubliner playing the violin outside Gare St Lazare. He offered to play a tune just for me, don’t you know. A famous melody, which instantly brought me back to the rolling hills and lakes of County Fermanagh I frolicked around when Mamma sent me to Portora Royal in Enniskillen to make a man of me. And make a man of me it did. O Mosie, such memories, playing with the big boys’ conkers behind the bicycle shed ...

“Yes you did, you told him my grandmother has died”.

“Oi tink ye’ll be knowin’ da Londonderry Air, so ye will, sorr,” said my violinist when he’d finished.

“No, I said your grandmother died. Preterite tense. Simple past. And she did die, didn’t she?

O, thank the Lord I was born in a respectable part of Dublin and studied at places such as Portora and Trinity College. Imagine the chagrin of having to speak like that all the time. And the name, Mosie, his given name!

Years ago. In Ireland. She died. You said so. She’s dead.”

Seamus O’Sheugh. Heavens, I feel grubby just writing it, let alone saying it.

I thought about this. “OK, OK, I can see that, but then you said I can’t go to the funeral in Ireland. That’s got to be a lie, surely.”

“Oh yes, the Londonderry Air. Naturally I am acquainted with it, my dear Seamus”, I simpered, “I have been intimate with many a London derrière, believe you me, but one of my main reasons for travelling here is to take a closer look at the Paris variety. Woo, woo!”

“But it’s true that you can’t go to the funeral because there isn’t going to be a funeral to go to, is there?

But damme if the confounded nincompoop merely looked at me blankly with knitted brows. The lights were on, but nobody home. Not a hint of a reaction. Pearls before swine, or I never saw it.

I told Ander it was a difficult day, too, which is also true, but it was him that made the connection between the two concepts, not me. Come on, you know how people are about their grandparents here. He’s given you a break. He’s forgotten about your job already. And you said yourself he’s neurotic, he worries about jobs for no reason, he wants your job right now, quickly, on his desk, so he can have more time to worry about everything else he doesn’t actually have to worry about in the first place. So, is the job mine or what?” And of course it was.

Nevertheless, despite his horrendous name, atrocious diction and dullness of intellect, Seamus was quite the gentleman (and a closet case, I suspect), and helped me out in all sorts of little ways. He assisted in getting me rooms and showed me around Paris. He also took me to a darling club in one of those seedy streets around Pigalle, “Les Garçons”, where there was nary a woman to be seen, apart from the owner, a rather severe-looking lady with close-cropped hair.

And don't miss tomorrow's special "Friday Cookery Day" - Translators' Lentil Stew. Sounds yummy, doesn't it?

“She bats for de udder soide, Mister Woilde”, Seamus whispered to me at the bar.

Friday 3 April

I decided to take this as a fresh opportunity, and so I tried again:

Apr 3

“Well”, I quipped, “if she bats for the other side, she may also have bowled many a maiden over. Woo, woo!”

“Virus kills over 10,000 and destroys 100,000 jobs in one month”, wails the headline. Well, thank God it’s Friday.

The man just stood there looking at me quizzically. For God’s sake …

And Friday means Cookery Day. For no particular reason. Certainly not because I’m renowned for my cooking skills, let it be said. I can do a dozen or so recipes well, another dozen not so well, and there are dozens more I don’t even bother with. And today it’s lentils:

“A maiden over”, I repeated, helplessly. “You know. Maiden – maiden over. As in cricket. And, er … knocked her for six on a deliciously wet sticky wicket, perhaps … er, howzat?”

Total cooking time: an hour, if that, in two user-friendly sessions, and you only have to actually work for about half of that. It really is a cinch, child’s play. It has to be for me, even though I do all the cooking around here between translations.

“How’s what, sorr?” was all he said, so I let it lie.

Ingredients for four people (or two chubby people, or two thin people and a kid, or three kids, or one chubby adult and two kids, three chubby kids etc.)

The sign outside “Les Garçons” was rather naughtily tongue-in-cheek, I thought – it said “Members Only”. Smiling devilishly, I had just opened my mouth to address Seamus on the subject in jest, but I closed it again because I was rapidly coming to the conclusion there was little point in such an enterprise with the likes of Mr O’Sheugh.

• 18 dessert spoons of lentils. The upmarket lentils that come in a cloth fabric bag, for best results, although some of the plastic-bag lentils aren’t bad either. Not that I spoon in those 18 spoons, but I used to until I smarted up, and now I know how many cups it is, and yes, I could tell you how many cups it is like they do in other recipes, but what kind of cup do I mean, and no, I’m not going to attach a photo. In fact, it isn’t even cups, it’s a mug full to the brim. So either you do the 18 spoons or you imagine a biggish kind of mug, and that’s 18 spoons. • Two very large potatoes • Two not so large carrots • One large clove of garlic • One medium-sized onion • One biggish green pepper • The Secret Ingredient

Considering the ghastly murders in Whitechapel a few years ago, the stage name of the star turn at “Les Garçons” was in rather bad taste, but I suppose Jacques Le Stripper was as good a name as any for an entrepreneuse to pull in the crowds. Our Jacques was from the colonies, big and black as a badger’s bottom. He came on and stripped, and then danced and strutted around for a while totally naked. There was even a contest one night. We paid a few coins for a ticket to guess the weight of a particular part of his body – no prizes for guessing which, my boy - and the prize was none other than a tête-à-tête with its proud owner the following evening. After a while a bald man came out with a special set of elongated scales, and Jacques laid his monster out on them. What luck - mine was the closest guess at a whopping 12 ounces!

The good thing about lentils is that you can just decide to do them there and then. None of that soak-in-water-overnight bollocks the purists will insist on – that’s for beans and chickpeas and suchlike. You just take your mug of lentils and you’re away.

As for my winnings, I was anxious to avoid any scandals with M. le Juge, and in that regard I could not take any chances with my busybody landlady, who was always prowling around. I thus implored Jacques to be discreet when he arrived at my rooms, and the darling man complied wonderfully. He dutifully slipped in the tradesman’s entrance and came up my back passage. Woo, woo!

Step 1:

But that was some years ago, and now I am ill, dreadfully ill. Ill and practically penniless, and I feel the end is near. Ever since I moved to this mean little hotel, my wallpaper and I have been fighting a duel to the death, Mosie, and one of us has got to go.

Put the minimum amount of water in the pressure cooker. You can put it on the heat straight away, because what you have to do isn’t going to take two minutes - throw in the lentils, peel the spuds and the carrots and put them in too, whole. You can peel the garlic if you like, although some people just throw that in unpeeled and take the skin off later. Two pinches of salt and that’s it.

The publisher was kind enough to send over a man to make some arrangements for me, but I am afraid to say that lately the only arrangements he is making are for my impending demise. The other day he was writing things down in a little book, and at one point enquired softly whether I would care to be placed in Père Lachaise cemetery when the time came.

Oh … no it isn’t, I forgot. Time for the Secret Ingredient. Take a good look around your kitchen. Anybody about?

Prostrate on my horrid bed and hardly able to move, I gave him a weak little smile and proffered my thanks, but shook my head and told him I would not be seen dead in the place. Can you believe he actually wrote that down in his notebook, Mosie?

You don’t want any witnesses, you know. Especially Basque witnesses, because they’re so bloody holier-than-thou about their gastronomy. Not to mention the French. Reach into your pocket and take out the beef stock cube you put in there earlier to keep it under wraps. You have to do this just before you close up the pressure cooker, never before. Got to destroy the evidence before all the Basques come piling into the kitchen, see, nosing around, asking questions, tut-tutting, frowning and wrinkling their noses. Makes no sense to get caught reaching up into the cupboard for the packet, especially as it’s difficult to get to because you’ve hidden it away at the back, or leaving it all alone in the water as the cooker fires up, because anyone could stroll into the kitchen and take a look. What poor old Jamie Oliver had to listen to from the Spaniards when he suggested a bit of chorizo in his paella.

Bless the man, he also wanted to know what kind of casket I should prefer:

Wait until the pressure cooker button comes up and then turn it down to chug along on low heat for half an hour. Time it on the mobile, and Translator Lentils are up and running, and now you can get back to the shedload of dreadful, dismal, dreary, droning C-suite blaargh you have to translate for this afternoon.

“There is the classic wooden variety, sir”, he told me, “although there are also versions made of specially strengthened kraft paper and other materials.”

Step 2:

My breathing was very laboured by now, and I said very slowly:

Open the pressure cooker and drain off a bit of the liquid, maybe. Should be kind of level with all the bits in it Now you can stick a knife in and cut the carrot into discs, and maybe halve the spuds. If you do it before, they fall apart while cooking – doesn’t look good.

“My dear fellow, my frenzied past is littered with amorous encounters, but I have now reached the stage where I care very little whether I get wood or whether I do not get wood.”

Chop the onion and the green pepper up fine, and fry them in olive oil on a low heat. Can’t let them burn. The onion has to “lose its pride”, as they say here, slowly. Just before they’re suitably soft to the poke, start warming up the lentils and the rest again, and simply throw the onion and pepper in there. Stir it around for a few minutes, and then turn off the heat. Finished. After an hour or two sitting there the fried stuff will have coagulated a bit into a delicious sauce, and then you just heat it up. Serve. Refuse to answer any questions on ingredients.

Another of those puzzled looks, dearest Mosie. The end was coming fast, and frankly I was beginning to wish it would arrive a little faster. But no, there was even more disappreciation torture in store for me:

Simple, right?

"And, er, Mr Wilde, would you like any music at the, er, event, sir?

None of that odd stuff you find on Internet, herbs and spices and Oriental vegetables you’ve never heard of. Just a simple, fast, nutritious eat.

Something sober and appropriate … some, er, Gregorian chants, perhaps?”

That’s it. Might post some nonsense later, but it’s back to C-suite for the moment.

Lord knows, Mosie, I did my level witty best until the bitter end:

Postcard from West Wales

“Given the state of my finances, my good man”, I croaked, “chance’d be a fine thing.”

This is a quiet place. Lots of rolling hills, lots of sheep, not too many people. Look out of the window and everything is as it should be. Grass growing, lambs bleating, birds a-tweeting, farmers making their bittersweet symphony of farmer noises (the constant chugging, revving and whining of machinery peppered with random thudding and banging, endless shouting and swearing, and no small amount of human whining about how hard it is to be a farmer). OK, then, not such a quiet place, but you know what I mean. Not exactly urban. No high-rises. No crowds. No mass hysteria. No evening clapalong with Vera Lynn, spirit of the Blitz. All that, er, English stuff. Just fields and trees and swathes of nodding daffodils. You wouldn’t know anything had changed.

I then watched in utter disbelief as the fool nodded and repeated it slowly while writing it down, “All right, so that’s … Gregorian … chants … a … fine … thing. Got that, sir”.

Head into town (Llanbedr Pont Steffan, or Lampeter in English), a conurbation of maybe 3,000 souls, and things are very different. Ten days into lockdown and there’s tumbleweed on the high street now that all the cafes and charity shops are closed (there weren’t any proper shops left anyway). Queues around the block to get into a poorly stocked supermarket (bog rolls back in stock, but no cat litter; a true nation of animal lovers). Half the people previously saying it’s only the flu are now masked up. There are police roadblocks to check on the essentiality of journeys. There are people snapping number plates of cars parked up in the forest to walk the dog, and reporting kids playing in the park, and shaming their neighbours online. It’s a police state, where there are snitches on every corner and jobsworths shutting down corner shops for selling non-essential goods like Easter eggs. The next step, of course, is for the tut-tutters on Facebook to get organised and arm up with sticks and start patrolling the streets. Not sure if it’s East Germany or Nazi Germany, but it sure ain’t Wales.

My time is up, Mosie. It is time for me to Meet my Maker. Love to you and the pretty boys always, and the last quip is for you, dear lad, for I am dying beyond my means. Woo … woo … woooooooo ….

The one thing there isn’t is corpses. Not even the hairdresser knows of anyone who’s actually had the virus. In ICU in Carmarthen they’re probably just playing cards and drinking beer. The virus clearly isn’t here. Unless those bloody English bastards bring it with them, dodging the roadblocks to abandon their disease-ridden commuter belts to quarantine in the second homes that have killed the villages and the language and the culture here - and probably now the whole older generation. Or those bastards from Cardiff and the Valleys who call themselves Welsh but don’t even speak the language and steal all the funding and are now heading over in their droves to the sprawling coastal caravan sites along with their light-fingered offspring and disease. What xenophobia?

...

So we quietly keep our heads down and muddle on. No dissent. No protest. No questioning the state propaganda machine as it assumes complete control. It’s wet dream time for the doom-mongering Daily Express. Suddenly we place blind faith in the same politicians we were ridiculing over Brexit only weeks ago. Even sing their praises as they so bravely carry on.

Thursday 2 April

And the whole time, the spring sun continues to shine and make it all seem like a dream, and we wait.

Apr 2

PS Mrs S says you really should soak lentils, Mervyn, to remove the lectins. Think windproofing.

“Six residents dead and 35 infected at an old people’s home in Balmaseda”, sighs the headline in the rag. Are we still allowed to say “old people’s home”?

Local time: 21:21

Or is it a home for the elderly?

As someone else said:

Please don’t tell me it’s a third-age residence or something similar. Oh, I've got it now - "senior citizens' home". Don’t know about other countries, but up and down this one they all seem to be death traps for both residents and staff, whatever they're called. Balmaseda, incidentally, is famous for its re-enactment of the crucifixion at Easter, with a young bearded bloke tramping through the streets bearing his cross. Easter, of course, has been cancelled everywhere. No need for it – plenty of crosses already being borne around here. And it’s not just Pilate busy washing his hands either.

"Wales. Safe as houses."

And plenty of accusations too from Philistines and Pharisees in the corridors of power, but not many Samaritans to be seen. Again, I imagine it’s the same in other countries, but here after a period of grace amid solemn declarations … solidarity in this hour of need … we shall fight as one on our balconies … totally at the disposal of the government of the day … lighting a glimmering candle of hope [candle of hope?] … unswerving belief in the final victory … we shall fight as one in our lounges … putting aside individual interests for the common good … we shall fight as one in our kitchens … our day will come … we shall fight as one in our toilets … etc., it’s now business as usual for lawmakers and moaning minnies, and so shit-stirring is back on the agenda again.

A fantastic read, Chris!

I don’t have so much work these days, but I do miss my cheerful secretary. Well, assistant, really. Yes, an assistant. She’s been with me for yonks now. Years back work was becoming too much for little me, so I put an ad in the paper, and among the candidates was Idoia. She arrived for interview at the office one troublesome afternoon. If you’ve heard this one before, by the way, just stop me …

What a regime of fear in Llanbedr Pont Steffan, indeed. The Lampeter Tourist Office might want a word in your shell-like if they get to read all that. Or did it close down years ago and get turned into a fish and chip shop?

“Good afternoon”, she smiled to me at the door. “My name’s Idoia. The interview for the assistant/secretary?”

Er, Mrs S isn't French, by any chance?

“Er yes, Miss, how are you”, I said, a little ruffled. “Er, it might be a little difficult to have the interview this afternoon. I’m usually well organised here, but I’ve got a problem with one of my more edgy neurotic busy-busy customers.”

Or Basque?

I meant Ander. Ander Uriarte. Ander Uriarte was the helpful kind who rings up every hour to check on how it’s going and remind you how important and non-negotiable the deadline is, and he had given me a text which, as I ploughed through it, turned out to be nightmarishly technical with format problems to boot, and to cut a long story short I wasn’t going to be able to make the deadline. You know that horrible sinking feeling, don’t you?

Just wondered ... ... oops, that's torn it, better open a few windows in here. She might be right after all.

“Busy-busy?” she said. “I know the type.”

And finally. Yes, again …

As the phone rang and I saw Ander’s number on screen, I said to Idoia, “Bloody hell. Now I’m about to be made to feel two inches high, it’s 4 o’clock now, and I’ll never make it for 5 pm.”

From the annals of Ernest Hemingway:

“Don’t worry”, said Idoia, putting her handbag down on the table and taking off her gloves. “I’ll talk to him. These Anders don’t bother me. Call it a hands-on interview test if you like.”

Woke up with a headache. Gee I felt rotten. Went to the telegraph place. Filed some copy to the newspaper. Went across to the bar. Fred was there with Paco. They were drinking brandy. I had one also. Then we all had another. “What about the bulls today, John?” Paco asked me. “I don’t know”, I told him, “I just don’t know, Paco, but what I do know is we’d better have another drink.” So we had another drink, and then another. And another just in case. A bullfighter I knew came in. Manuel. Manuel Porompompero y Fandánguez de la Copla. From the lonely plains of Castilla. He had a sad tortured look about him. No doubt thinking about the ring this afternoon at five o’clock. A las cinco de la tarde. The sand, the heat, the blood, sweat and cheers, the glory, the slurping champagne from Ava Gardner’s high heels afterwards in her hotel room. Or slurping Lucozade at the hospital, recovering from major disembowelment. He was with his manager. They bought us a drink and sat down in a corner to talk about today’s bulls. Then we bought them one. Then Felicity came along.

”You?

I think I had always been in love with Felicity. Even before I met her. Felicity was from the lonely plains of Iowa.

But you don’t know anything about the job, or know him, either, or …”

"Have a drink, Felicity”, I said. She took off her enormous pink hat and fluttered her eyelashes. “Oh John”, she said. “Oh John”. Nobody could say Oh John like Felicity. “Oh John, I sure wish I could be in love with you, but I simply can’t. Sure as heck I can’t. It’s hateful. Will you buy me a drink even though I can’t love you?

“I don’t need to know anything”, said Idoia. “Leave it to me. Oh, by the way, is your grandmother still alive?”

You will?

“What?

That’s just SO sweet.” So we all had a drink etc. etc. etc. etc.

My grandmother?

Woke up with a headache. Again. “Hell, better file some copy to the paper”, I thought. “If I can remember anything about yesterday. If I can remember which paper I write for.” My, I felt bad. So bad that a man would be tempted to head for the lonely plains of Idaho. To a log cabin with a gun, perhaps. “No”, I decided, “I’ll leave that for another 20 or 30 years.”

What do you mean?

“Short the day and long the night”, I found myself mumbling as I woke up. Couldn’t remember the night before, but it must have been a long one for sure. At least I’d got something suitably creative and tortured to write for my next round of copy to the paper. I muttered it to myself a few times. Then I sighed it theatrically. I was a little worried that perhaps it would be better as “Long the day and short the night”, but decided it really didn’t matter a coyote’s howl anyways. Come to think of it, that “coyote’s howl” thing had potential too, already. “Short the day, and long the night, long as a coyote’s howl”. No, it lacked a little balance.

No, she’s dead. Both of them are dead. Years ago, in Ireland. I hardly knew either of them. But what’s that got to do with –“

I said it in a low growl into my pillow: “Short the day and long the night”. Yep, it was a damn fine phrase already. “Short the day and long the night”, I said again, in the most haunted, mysterious, decadent, suggestive and sinister way I could, all at the same time.

“That should make it a little easier for you, then”, she said mysteriously as she moved across to the phone.

“Oh John. Oh John, that’s so beautiful.”

She put the call on loudspeaker and we heard Ander say, “Hello, is Mervyn there, it’s about an urgent job, very urgent in fact, I just wanted to make sure it’ll be OK for 5, but really 4.30 would be better, or even 4.45. It’s urgent, you see, very urgent …”

I could feel the warm breasts crushing against me as she spooned into my back, and raised up one milky leg with her wicked wet curls rasping over my bare buttocks.

Idoia smiled at me, mouthed “Urgent” to me, then stopped smiling before she spoke into the mouthpiece. “Oh hello Ander, good afternoon, this is Idoia. I’m afraid he’s not here at the moment. A really difficult day we’re having, and no mistake. … You didn’t know his grandmother died, did you?”

“Oh John”, came another whisper in that smoky smoochy smouldering way only she had, as her naughty nimble fingers glided slowly and sexily across my hip down to where the great beast rose up from slumber to greet them.

!!!!!!!!!!!!!

“Oh Felicity”, I said, turning over.

I tried not to gasp, but my jaw dropped an inch or two, and I waved my hands at her, mouthing “No, no, no ….”

… “Felicity?

But Ander had already gasped himself – “Oh no, I didn’t know, oh that’s dreadful”, we heard him say.

What?

“Yes”, said Idoia, “yes, she died. In Ireland. Very sad. He’s in a real tizzy today. And he can’t go to the funeral, of course.”

Who?

Ander was aghast. “Oh no, oh no, this is terrible, how awful, oh, really, the job can wait, in fact, it’ll be OK tomorrow, or the next day even, it’s not actually that urgent at all, er, tell him I’m really sorry, won’t you, erm, Miss … erm?”

Who the Sam Hill heck is Felicity?” came the reply as the smoking, smooching, smouldering and fingers disappeared, leaving nothing but an angry, suspicious, naked wench sitting up in bed beside me.

”Idoia”, she said. “Idoia Belaustegigoitia Irigoyen. I’m just helping out on a skeleton basis today, but (she raised her eyebrows as she looked over at me) I may be around more permanently soon.”

Rule Number One for international hacks waking up after a hard day’s night. Never say the woman’s name without running that vital face check first. Moreover, I know it seems a kinda obvious thing to say in these cases, but if you break Rule Number One, then get a grip already, and don’t break Rule Number Two. What I mean is, never ever then say: “Jesus H.C., who the hell are YOU already?”

She thanked Ander and came off the phone. “Well, you’ve got another day at least. OK?”

I scratched my head and looked her up and down. “Jesus H.C.”, I said. “Who the hell are YOU already?”

I was horrified. “But Miss, er, Idoia, how could you do such a thing, lying to him like that?”

“You jerk!

“Pardon me, but I haven’t lied to anyone”, the girl said firmly.

You don’t remember anything?

“Yes you did, you told him my grandmother has died”.

Elizabeth. From Lonely Plains, Wisconsin?

“No, I said your grandmother died. Preterite tense. Simple past. And she did die, didn’t she?

Tagnabbit, did last night mean nothing to you, you insensitive monster?”

Years ago. In Ireland. She died. You said so. She’s dead.”

And in the confusion I clean forgot about Rule Number Three, sure as hot hell fire I did, like a goddamn motherfriggin’ horse’s ass.

I thought about this. “OK, OK, I can see that, but then you said I can’t go to the funeral in Ireland. That’s got to be a lie, surely.”

“Gee I’m sorry honey”, I said to her all bleary-eyed, “but you just gotta understand I thought you were somebody else, see?”

“But it’s true that you can’t go to the funeral because there isn’t going to be a funeral to go to, is there?

I was half asleep all right, but I’m here to tell you that bedside lamp crashing against my skull woke me up already, before she stormed out of the hotel room with just a sheet around her.

I told Ander it was a difficult day, too, which is also true, but it was him that made the connection between the two concepts, not me. Come on, you know how people are about their grandparents here. He’s given you a break. He’s forgotten about your job already. And you said yourself he’s neurotic, he worries about jobs for no reason, he wants your job right now, quickly, on his desk, so he can have more time to worry about everything else he doesn’t actually have to worry about in the first place. So, is the job mine or what?” And of course it was.

“You hick!” I shouted after her. “Your first orgasm ever, and you think it’s love already. Never been with a real man before, huh, Elizabeth?” …

And don't miss tomorrow's special "Friday Cookery Day" - Translators' Lentil Stew. Sounds yummy, doesn't it?

The trials and tribulations of mervynating

Friday 3 April

I was trying to do a Mervyn, but it’s hard on a piddling autocorrecting mobile phone with sausage fingers, especially in my current immobilised circumstances as I lie here contemplating those darned piles, that month’s worth of work on my desk I was once so smug about now just gathering dust, and growing increasingly jaded and almost wilfully letting my inner cynic get the upper hand.

Apr 3

But it is a somewhat discombobulating mixture of post-apocalyptic and perfectly normal out there. A sense of impending doom, tempered perhaps by a lingering suspicion that it could still prove a storm in a teacup, or just a cover-up for 5G radiation, a 21st century phenomenon unlikely to reach us until the 22nd.

“Virus kills over 10,000 and destroys 100,000 jobs in one month”, wails the headline. Well, thank God it’s Friday.

I should, of course, be seizing on the positives. Bragging online about how my business is continuing to support the brave fight against the evil virus and prop up the economy (but keep washing your hands, peeps!). How I’ve selflessly moved back in with my at-risk ex to help deal with the kids through the lockdown (look after the vulnerable, folks!). How I’ve hung up my mountain biking shoes to avoid accidentally snot-rocketing on Little Red Riding Hood (stay at home, everyone!).

And Friday means Cookery Day. For no particular reason. Certainly not because I’m renowned for my cooking skills, let it be said. I can do a dozen or so recipes well, another dozen not so well, and there are dozens more I don’t even bother with. And today it’s lentils:

Oh damn, I just did. What a virtue-signalling nob.

Total cooking time: an hour, if that, in two user-friendly sessions, and you only have to actually work for about half of that. It really is a cinch, child’s play. It has to be for me, even though I do all the cooking around here between translations.

Stick ...

Ingredients for four people (or two chubby people, or two thin people and a kid, or three kids, or one chubby adult and two kids, three chubby kids etc.)

... it out there, Chris!

• 18 dessert spoons of lentils. The upmarket lentils that come in a cloth fabric bag, for best results, although some of the plastic-bag lentils aren’t bad either. Not that I spoon in those 18 spoons, but I used to until I smarted up, and now I know how many cups it is, and yes, I could tell you how many cups it is like they do in other recipes, but what kind of cup do I mean, and no, I’m not going to attach a photo. In fact, it isn’t even cups, it’s a mug full to the brim. So either you do the 18 spoons or you imagine a biggish kind of mug, and that’s 18 spoons. • Two very large potatoes • Two not so large carrots • One large clove of garlic • One medium-sized onion • One biggish green pepper • The Secret Ingredient

You're doing fine. And (seriously - I have to say "seriously", because otherwise no bugger believes me) the bit about your ex + kids is frankly laudable.

The good thing about lentils is that you can just decide to do them there and then. None of that soak-in-water-overnight bollocks the purists will insist on – that’s for beans and chickpeas and suchlike. You just take your mug of lentils and you’re away.

So ... crack open a few bottles of Taff Daffodil Extra as you listen to We Are The Champions, watch an episode of Only Fools And Horses, or How Green Was My Valley (before all the aforementioned barstids came and ruined it), go to bed and forget about it. Tomorrow's another day, and it's Saturday too.

Step 1:

But I do beg to correct you on just one thing - I have a feeling the word you're looking for is "discomknockerating", said with an optional "missus" afterwards, thus:

Put the minimum amount of water in the pressure cooker. You can put it on the heat straight away, because what you have to do isn’t going to take two minutes - throw in the lentils, peel the spuds and the carrots and put them in too, whole. You can peel the garlic if you like, although some people just throw that in unpeeled and take the skin off later. Two pinches of salt and that’s it.

https://www.minsterfm.com/content/video/184/its-discomknockerating-ken-dodd-on-being-knighted/

Oh … no it isn’t, I forgot. Time for the Secret Ingredient. Take a good look around your kitchen. Anybody about?

And finally finally ...

You don’t want any witnesses, you know. Especially Basque witnesses, because they’re so bloody holier-than-thou about their gastronomy. Not to mention the French. Reach into your pocket and take out the beef stock cube you put in there earlier to keep it under wraps. You have to do this just before you close up the pressure cooker, never before. Got to destroy the evidence before all the Basques come piling into the kitchen, see, nosing around, asking questions, tut-tutting, frowning and wrinkling their noses. Makes no sense to get caught reaching up into the cupboard for the packet, especially as it’s difficult to get to because you’ve hidden it away at the back, or leaving it all alone in the water as the cooker fires up, because anyone could stroll into the kitchen and take a look. What poor old Jamie Oliver had to listen to from the Spaniards when he suggested a bit of chorizo in his paella.

... for everyone's Covid-19 weekend:

Wait until the pressure cooker button comes up and then turn it down to chug along on low heat for half an hour. Time it on the mobile, and Translator Lentils are up and running, and now you can get back to the shedload of dreadful, dismal, dreary, droning C-suite blaargh you have to translate for this afternoon.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoaktW-Lu38

Step 2:

And don't forget to wash your hands 😊

Open the pressure cooker and drain off a bit of the liquid, maybe. Should be kind of level with all the bits in it Now you can stick a knife in and cut the carrot into discs, and maybe halve the spuds. If you do it before, they fall apart while cooking – doesn’t look good.

The Fab Four come to our rescue.

Chop the onion and the green pepper up fine, and fry them in olive oil on a low heat. Can’t let them burn. The onion has to “lose its pride”, as they say here, slowly. Just before they’re suitably soft to the poke, start warming up the lentils and the rest again, and simply throw the onion and pepper in there. Stir it around for a few minutes, and then turn off the heat. Finished. After an hour or two sitting there the fried stuff will have coagulated a bit into a delicious sauce, and then you just heat it up. Serve. Refuse to answer any questions on ingredients.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxOJ7hh3H-I

Simple, right?

Saturday 4 April

None of that odd stuff you find on Internet, herbs and spices and Oriental vegetables you’ve never heard of. Just a simple, fast, nutritious eat.

Apr 4

That’s it. Might post some nonsense later, but it’s back to C-suite for the moment.

“Government now recommends use of masks”, says one headline. “Sánchez prepares to extend the lockdown following consultations with experts”, says another. On Saturday I buy two national rags, one kind of governmenty and the other, while not giving many presents to anybody, is always thrilled to get in a dig at the left.

Postcard from West Wales

Experts. Lockdown experts, presumably. The TV has been heaving with experts lately. All of them reporting from home with their bookshelves to the rear.

This is a quiet place. Lots of rolling hills, lots of sheep, not too many people. Look out of the window and everything is as it should be. Grass growing, lambs bleating, birds a-tweeting, farmers making their bittersweet symphony of farmer noises (the constant chugging, revving and whining of machinery peppered with random thudding and banging, endless shouting and swearing, and no small amount of human whining about how hard it is to be a farmer). OK, then, not such a quiet place, but you know what I mean. Not exactly urban. No high-rises. No crowds. No mass hysteria. No evening clapalong with Vera Lynn, spirit of the Blitz. All that, er, English stuff. Just fields and trees and swathes of nodding daffodils. You wouldn’t know anything had changed.

I used to get up at around 6 or 7 to get an early start to the day, rather than work until 9 or 10 at night. But as you know, of course, sometimes you have to burn it at both ends anyway. I still get up early. Used to be that as I did so on Friday, Saturday, and especially Sunday mornings, even before I hit the street, from the bedroom I could hear the squeals and shouts and screeches and singing round about, the twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings (and the thirteen-somethings too) wending their merry way home after a night out.

Head into town (Llanbedr Pont Steffan, or Lampeter in English), a conurbation of maybe 3,000 souls, and things are very different. Ten days into lockdown and there’s tumbleweed on the high street now that all the cafes and charity shops are closed (there weren’t any proper shops left anyway). Queues around the block to get into a poorly stocked supermarket (bog rolls back in stock, but no cat litter; a true nation of animal lovers). Half the people previously saying it’s only the flu are now masked up. There are police roadblocks to check on the essentiality of journeys. There are people snapping number plates of cars parked up in the forest to walk the dog, and reporting kids playing in the park, and shaming their neighbours online. It’s a police state, where there are snitches on every corner and jobsworths shutting down corner shops for selling non-essential goods like Easter eggs. The next step, of course, is for the tut-tutters on Facebook to get organised and arm up with sticks and start patrolling the streets. Not sure if it’s East Germany or Nazi Germany, but it sure ain’t Wales.

Yes, Friday mornings too. When I first arrived here I learned that Thursday night was known as “knickers night” in Bilbao – I was told that many of the young girls from the villages out in the sticks, who lived in the city during the week to study at university and had recently discovered total freedom to go to bed whenever they liked, and with whomever they liked too, took particular advantage of Thursday nights because the following day they had to go back to the sticks for the weekend and behave themselves with p and m at home. More like no-knickers night, then, I thought at the time, but that’s what I was told.

The one thing there isn’t is corpses. Not even the hairdresser knows of anyone who’s actually had the virus. In ICU in Carmarthen they’re probably just playing cards and drinking beer. The virus clearly isn’t here. Unless those bloody English bastards bring it with them, dodging the roadblocks to abandon their disease-ridden commuter belts to quarantine in the second homes that have killed the villages and the language and the culture here - and probably now the whole older generation. Or those bastards from Cardiff and the Valleys who call themselves Welsh but don’t even speak the language and steal all the funding and are now heading over in their droves to the sprawling coastal caravan sites along with their light-fingered offspring and disease. What xenophobia?

Sometimes I had to go further afield, down to the Casco, and on the way Gran Vía would be streaming with them in and around the metro – shriekers with torn tights, roaring lads staggering along with kalimotxo (Coca-Cola and red wine) in a plastic cup, the lovestruck sitting bawling their eyes out in a doorway being comforted by a drunken friend or two, others busy making pavement pizzas … It used to annoy me, although I was them years ago too (except I never tore my tights).

So we quietly keep our heads down and muddle on. No dissent. No protest. No questioning the state propaganda machine as it assumes complete control. It’s wet dream time for the doom-mongering Daily Express. Suddenly we place blind faith in the same politicians we were ridiculing over Brexit only weeks ago. Even sing their praises as they so bravely carry on.

I was down Gran Vía this morning. Hardly a soul to be seen.

And the whole time, the spring sun continues to shine and make it all seem like a dream, and we wait.

How I miss them now.

PS Mrs S says you really should soak lentils, Mervyn, to remove the lectins. Think windproofing.

Sunday 5 April

Local time: 21:21

Apr 5

As someone else said:

“At home after 26 April too,” quavers the headline. Spain’s lockdown was already going to be extended from 15 to 26 April, but, well, it’ll probably be longer. Think positive, though – for the first time last night there had been fewer deaths in 24 hours. They have a daily 24-hour death round-up every night on the news. I say the news, but there’s only one item, it’s rarely good news, and it’s not what you’d call new news either. So it was around 802 dead yesterday, against something like 814 the day before. This reminds me of a set of annual accounts, where they brighten up the figures a touch with “the pace of the downturn in profits has slackened somewhat” (we’re still losing money, but not hand over fist like before). Then we have the sports section, necessarily short these days and only the important bits such as musings on the tribulations of pay cuts for footballers and sighing at the cancellation of the Olympic Games. Last up is the weather. Storm receding, though still cloudy, with occasional sunny intervals, so don’t forget your umbrella if you’re going out. Or your gloves. Or that mask.

"Wales. Safe as houses."

The 8 pm applause continues, although one of the neighbours (and, I suspect, others all over Bilbao) has now got people dancing on their balconies to the 80s pop song “Resistiré” he blasts out from his house. This has become a symbol of the virus all around now, rather similar to Gloria Gaynor’s “I will survive”.

A fantastic read, Chris!

Can’t be bothered much today. So, without further ado, following up the Macbeth Syndrome the other day, here’s an adapted narration of what might have happened if Macbeth hadn’t been decapitated by Macduff and had been arrested on a charge of murder in the first and brought in for interrogation at Inverness by a couple of detectives sent up from The Smoke (yes, I know):

What a regime of fear in Llanbedr Pont Steffan, indeed. The Lampeter Tourist Office might want a word in your shell-like if they get to read all that. Or did it close down years ago and get turned into a fish and chip shop?

(In the interrogation room)

Er, Mrs S isn't French, by any chance?

… “So, about this sword of yours, Mr. Macbeth. It’s not registered at the police station, is it?

Or Basque?

Used it or brandished it at all lately, have we, sir?

Just wondered ... ... oops, that's torn it, better open a few windows in here. She might be right after all.

What’s that, Mr. Macbeth?

And finally. Yes, again …

Oh I SEE, only for squirrels around the castle. Did you hear that, Sergeant?

From the annals of Ernest Hemingway:

Squirrels, he says. Come off it, Mr. Macbeth. You can do better than that, sir, surely. Look at the bloody thing, man – it must weigh at least twenty pounds. Squirrels?

Woke up with a headache. Gee I felt rotten. Went to the telegraph place. Filed some copy to the newspaper. Went across to the bar. Fred was there with Paco. They were drinking brandy. I had one also. Then we all had another. “What about the bulls today, John?” Paco asked me. “I don’t know”, I told him, “I just don’t know, Paco, but what I do know is we’d better have another drink.” So we had another drink, and then another. And another just in case. A bullfighter I knew came in. Manuel. Manuel Porompompero y Fandánguez de la Copla. From the lonely plains of Castilla. He had a sad tortured look about him. No doubt thinking about the ring this afternoon at five o’clock. A las cinco de la tarde. The sand, the heat, the blood, sweat and cheers, the glory, the slurping champagne from Ava Gardner’s high heels afterwards in her hotel room. Or slurping Lucozade at the hospital, recovering from major disembowelment. He was with his manager. They bought us a drink and sat down in a corner to talk about today’s bulls. Then we bought them one. Then Felicity came along.

Squirrels scurry up and down trees looking for nuts to scoff, Mr. Macbeth. Squirrels dart comically about everywhere. The jolly little rascals like nothing better than to scamper gaily to and fro all the live long day, sir. What kind of squirrel would you do in with a sword like that, Mr. Macbeth?

I think I had always been in love with Felicity. Even before I met her. Felicity was from the lonely plains of Iowa.

A squirrel with a broken ankle edging through the undergrowth on crutches?

"Have a drink, Felicity”, I said. She took off her enormous pink hat and fluttered her eyelashes. “Oh John”, she said. “Oh John”. Nobody could say Oh John like Felicity. “Oh John, I sure wish I could be in love with you, but I simply can’t. Sure as heck I can’t. It’s hateful. Will you buy me a drink even though I can’t love you?

A grandad squirrel with a flat cap, asthma and chronic arthritis?

You will?

A squirrel caught napping on the bog with his bloody pants down around those little furry legs, Mr. Macbeth?”

That’s just SO sweet.” So we all had a drink etc. etc. etc. etc.

“Know what’ll happen when our Forensics confirm microscopic traces of King Duncan’s blood all over that sword, Macbeth?

Woke up with a headache. Again. “Hell, better file some copy to the paper”, I thought. “If I can remember anything about yesterday. If I can remember which paper I write for.” My, I felt bad. So bad that a man would be tempted to head for the lonely plains of Idaho. To a log cabin with a gun, perhaps. “No”, I decided, “I’ll leave that for another 20 or 30 years.”

Given the circumstances, we might even have you for lese-majesty, too. That’s high treason to you and me, that is. And you know what that means, doncha?

“Short the day and long the night”, I found myself mumbling as I woke up. Couldn’t remember the night before, but it must have been a long one for sure. At least I’d got something suitably creative and tortured to write for my next round of copy to the paper. I muttered it to myself a few times. Then I sighed it theatrically. I was a little worried that perhaps it would be better as “Long the day and short the night”, but decided it really didn’t matter a coyote’s howl anyways. Come to think of it, that “coyote’s howl” thing had potential too, already. “Short the day, and long the night, long as a coyote’s howl”. No, it lacked a little balance.

Means you got yourself a date with the hangman, Mr. Macbeth. It’s only a matter of time before we find Banquo in some ditch out there, too. We got our boys in blue right now scouring the woods over a ten-league radius, we have. Straight up. Going through it all with a fine toothcomb, they are. They don’t miss nothing, you know, our lads. What’s that you say, sir?

I said it in a low growl into my pillow: “Short the day and long the night”. Yep, it was a damn fine phrase already. “Short the day and long the night”, I said again, in the most haunted, mysterious, decadent, suggestive and sinister way I could, all at the same time.

Your alibi?

“Oh John. Oh John, that’s so beautiful.”

Oh PLEASE. So you’ve got an alibi for that one, Mr. Macbeth. You was tucked up all cosy in bed with Her Indoors, wasn’t you, but what you don’t know is that Murderers One, Two and Three are already singing like canaries in another little room we’ve got right next door here, even as we speak, oh yes. Besides, Mr. Macbeth, by the looks of things your old lady’s testimony will be about as much use to you as a priest’s bollocks. Bonkers, the medics reckon. Lost her marbles. Rabbiting on to herself all day long, she is, rubbing at her hands, screaming “Out, damn spot!” Who’s gonna accept testimony from a raving lunatic, eh?

I could feel the warm breasts crushing against me as she spooned into my back, and raised up one milky leg with her wicked wet curls rasping over my bare buttocks.

They’ll laugh her out of court. Know what I see when I look at you, Mr. Macbeth?

“Oh John”, came another whisper in that smoky smoochy smouldering way only she had, as her naughty nimble fingers glided slowly and sexily across my hip down to where the great beast rose up from slumber to greet them.

A dead man walking, that’s what. A dead man walking.”

“Oh Felicity”, I said, turning over.

“But, before they top you, Mr. Macbeth, you’ll have to do some time first. Oh yes. Ever heard of Barlinnie, have you?

… “Felicity?

No?

What?

Well, it’s a little hotel run by the state. Down Glasgow way. A bit crowded, mind. Lots of big bad boys cooped up in there, son. Dangerous nutcases, some of ‘em, I’d say. Bad news, they are, Mr. Macbeth. Big ugly animals. Nervous primates, like. Smack in their veins, tattoos in their teeth, muscles in their hair, and evil in their blacker than black hearts. I wouldn’t like to be in your shoes when the Daddy claps his eyes on a good-looking bloke like yourself to play doctors and nurses with in the scary scary darkness after lights-out. And in Barlinnie, Mr. Macbeth, you won’t have no big sword like this to play the hard man with neither, will you sir?”

Who?

Dental hygiene

Who the Sam Hill heck is Felicity?” came the reply as the smoking, smooching, smouldering and fingers disappeared, leaving nothing but an angry, suspicious, naked wench sitting up in bed beside me.

fine toothcomb

Rule Number One for international hacks waking up after a hard day’s night. Never say the woman’s name without running that vital face check first. Moreover, I know it seems a kinda obvious thing to say in these cases, but if you break Rule Number One, then get a grip already, and don’t break Rule Number Two. What I mean is, never ever then say: “Jesus H.C., who the hell are YOU already?”

I must admit I spent my first 40 years wondering why people would want to comb their teeth

I scratched my head and looked her up and down. “Jesus H.C.”, I said. “Who the hell are YOU already?”

😂

“You jerk!

Monday 6

You don’t remember anything?

April 08:35

Elizabeth. From Lonely Plains, Wisconsin?

“It’s all over!

Tagnabbit, did last night mean nothing to you, you insensitive monster?”

Man walks dog. Lion lies down with lamb and church bells ring out as entire world suddenly cured,” crowed the headline.

And in the confusion I clean forgot about Rule Number Three, sure as hot hell fire I did, like a goddamn motherfriggin’ horse’s ass.

The alarm rang close to my ear, jolting me awake. “Better go and find out what the real headline says,” I yawned.

“Gee I’m sorry honey”, I said to her all bleary-eyed, “but you just gotta understand I thought you were somebody else, see?”

The real one says “Government to carry out en masse tests to locate and isolate those with no symptoms”. And they’re asking large corporations and other organisations to send in a list of premises and spaces, to be used as “Noah’s Ark” separation facilities. Talk about “us and them”.

I was half asleep all right, but I’m here to tell you that bedside lamp crashing against my skull woke me up already, before she stormed out of the hotel room with just a sheet around her.

Noah's arc 14:11

“You hick!” I shouted after her. “Your first orgasm ever, and you think it’s love already. Never been with a real man before, huh, Elizabeth?” …

Is this the rise of the immune?

The trials and tribulations of mervynating

Animal Farm

I was trying to do a Mervyn, but it’s hard on a piddling autocorrecting mobile phone with sausage fingers, especially in my current immobilised circumstances as I lie here contemplating those darned piles, that month’s worth of work on my desk I was once so smug about now just gathering dust, and growing increasingly jaded and almost wilfully letting my inner cynic get the upper hand.

15:44

But it is a somewhat discombobulating mixture of post-apocalyptic and perfectly normal out there. A sense of impending doom, tempered perhaps by a lingering suspicion that it could still prove a storm in a teacup, or just a cover-up for 5G radiation, a 21st century phenomenon unlikely to reach us until the 22nd.

Talking of Noah’s Ark, these days it might be a good idea to keep a watchful eye on any pets you might have. That big shaggy dog asleep over there by the fireplace, for example. He might seem contented and well-disposed and loyal now, wagging that bloody tail of his all the time, panting and wuffing and arf-arfing, larking about with the kids and rolling over on his back to die for the Queen, but you watch your frigging back if things get tough, the Pal and Winalot are being rationed, and there's no more walkies. When push comes to shove, you can forget all that malarkey about man’s best friend, because he’ll be looking out for number one, that’s for sure. And he’s not actually sleeping, either, so watch your mouth, careful what you say about him, and definitely don’t voice any concerns around him, either, because the last thing you want to do is make the bastard nervous. He might seem like he’s dozing, but he opens one eye now and again, and he’s listening to every single word you say. Once he isn’t getting spoilt rotten by the humans, he might just decide to take things into his own paws. So start locking the door of your bedroom when you hit the sack. Might be an idea to put up a hidden camera or two when you get the chance, when he's out of the room. See what he does at night when he thinks nobody’s looking. Might even be ringing up other dogs in the same situation. Once they start pooling all their whines and whimpers, the whole street might face a mutiny if this goes south. Oh, so you think he can’t use a phone just because he doesn’t have opposable thumbs?

I should, of course, be seizing on the positives. Bragging online about how my business is continuing to support the brave fight against the evil virus and prop up the economy (but keep washing your hands, peeps!). How I’ve selflessly moved back in with my at-risk ex to help deal with the kids through the lockdown (look after the vulnerable, folks!). How I’ve hung up my mountain biking shoes to avoid accidentally snot-rocketing on Little Red Riding Hood (stay at home, everyone!).

Think again. Think of all the tricks you taught him. And the other tricks he learnt on his own, but never showed you. Just in case. Biding his time, that’s what he's doing. And you think he can’t talk, either?

Oh damn, I just did. What a virtue-signalling nob.

Think again. Remember Lassie. Lassie comes running in barking, and the kid says “Hey Pop, I think she’s trying to tell us something!

Stick ...

What’s wrong, girl?” … woof-woof-woof …“Two people?” … woof-woof-woof … “A man and his little girl?” … woof-woof-woof … “Trapped?” … Trapped where, Lassie?” … woof-woof-woof … “A disused mine shaft?” … “Where, Lassie?

... it out there, Chris!

Show us where, girl!

You're doing fine. And (seriously - I have to say "seriously", because otherwise no bugger believes me) the bit about your ex + kids is frankly laudable.

… woof-woof-woof woof-woof-woof woof-woof-woof woof-woof-woof

So ... crack open a few bottles of Taff Daffodil Extra as you listen to We Are The Champions, watch an episode of Only Fools And Horses, or How Green Was My Valley (before all the aforementioned barstids came and ruined it), go to bed and forget about it. Tomorrow's another day, and it's Saturday too.

Or that cat up there at the window, occasionally turning her head slowly and deliberately to look at you in undisguised disgust. What’s she staring at out there anyway?

But I do beg to correct you on just one thing - I have a feeling the word you're looking for is "discomknockerating", said with an optional "missus" afterwards, thus:

Keeping an eye on the humans outside, that’s what. They’re even worse than dogs, because they’re smarter. More independent. You can shout at the dog for leaving his mess in the kitchen or shaking the rain off himself or just because you’ve had a bad day and you feel like bawling him out, and he’ll hang his head and run off and hide, but in five minutes he’ll be back licking your hand. Well, just you try that with her up there at the window. She never liked you anyway. She hated you and the rest of them from the start. She was only there for the Whiskas. You might get away with the rough treatment once, but she won’t forgive you like a dog might do. When you go to the cupboard and suddenly find there’s no cat food left, turn around slowly. Yes, there she is, up at that bloody window, claws out. Watching you.

https://www.minsterfm.com/content/video/184/its-discomknockerating-ken-dodd-on-being-knighted/

Man's best friend

And finally finally ...

16:18

... for everyone's Covid-19 weekend:

Check out these dogs Mervyn

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoaktW-Lu38

www.instagram.com/mnishka.707

And don't forget to wash your hands 😊

My money ...

The Fab Four come to our rescue.

16:24

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxOJ7hh3H-I

... is on the black one. He's about to sink his teeth into the one in front. And if he'd do that to one of his own ...

Saturday 4 April

Interesting work. Some of it quite disturbing. Is all that yours?

Apr 4

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page13.html

“Government now recommends use of masks”, says one headline. “Sánchez prepares to extend the lockdown following consultations with experts”, says another. On Saturday I buy two national rags, one kind of governmenty and the other, while not giving many presents to anybody, is always thrilled to get in a dig at the left.

All mine (stolen)

Experts. Lockdown experts, presumably. The TV has been heaving with experts lately. All of them reporting from home with their bookshelves to the rear.

Apr 6

I used to get up at around 6 or 7 to get an early start to the day, rather than work until 9 or 10 at night. But as you know, of course, sometimes you have to burn it at both ends anyway. I still get up early. Used to be that as I did so on Friday, Saturday, and especially Sunday mornings, even before I hit the street, from the bedroom I could hear the squeals and shouts and screeches and singing round about, the twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings (and the thirteen-somethings too) wending their merry way home after a night out.

All of the images are drawings or paintings copied off other works of art or photography composed as an ensemble, it's all in the composition.

Yes, Friday mornings too. When I first arrived here I learned that Thursday night was known as “knickers night” in Bilbao – I was told that many of the young girls from the villages out in the sticks, who lived in the city during the week to study at university and had recently discovered total freedom to go to bed whenever they liked, and with whomever they liked too, took particular advantage of Thursday nights because the following day they had to go back to the sticks for the weekend and behave themselves with p and m at home. More like no-knickers night, then, I thought at the time, but that’s what I was told.

Just like a musician, there are only so many notes but how you compose them, there in lies the magic.

Sometimes I had to go further afield, down to the Casco, and on the way Gran Vía would be streaming with them in and around the metro – shriekers with torn tights, roaring lads staggering along with kalimotxo (Coca-Cola and red wine) in a plastic cup, the lovestruck sitting bawling their eyes out in a doorway being comforted by a drunken friend or two, others busy making pavement pizzas … It used to annoy me, although I was them years ago too (except I never tore my tights).

Don't you think Hammerhead is magnificent, it can be yours for £100 000, my special friend price.

I was down Gran Vía this morning. Hardly a soul to be seen.

Local time: 22:44

How I miss them now.

Tuesday 7 April

Sunday 5 April

Apr 7

Apr 5

Headline: “Government seeks legal formulae to force asymptomatic isolation”.

“At home after 26 April too,” quavers the headline. Spain’s lockdown was already going to be extended from 15 to 26 April, but, well, it’ll probably be longer. Think positive, though – for the first time last night there had been fewer deaths in 24 hours. They have a daily 24-hour death round-up every night on the news. I say the news, but there’s only one item, it’s rarely good news, and it’s not what you’d call new news either. So it was around 802 dead yesterday, against something like 814 the day before. This reminds me of a set of annual accounts, where they brighten up the figures a touch with “the pace of the downturn in profits has slackened somewhat” (we’re still losing money, but not hand over fist like before). Then we have the sports section, necessarily short these days and only the important bits such as musings on the tribulations of pay cuts for footballers and sighing at the cancellation of the Olympic Games. Last up is the weather. Storm receding, though still cloudy, with occasional sunny intervals, so don’t forget your umbrella if you’re going out. Or your gloves. Or that mask.

And the death count down again, 600 and a bit since yesterday.

The 8 pm applause continues, although one of the neighbours (and, I suspect, others all over Bilbao) has now got people dancing on their balconies to the 80s pop song “Resistiré” he blasts out from his house. This has become a symbol of the virus all around now, rather similar to Gloria Gaynor’s “I will survive”.

It’s all getting a bit repetitive.

Can’t be bothered much today. So, without further ado, following up the Macbeth Syndrome the other day, here’s an adapted narration of what might have happened if Macbeth hadn’t been decapitated by Macduff and had been arrested on a charge of murder in the first and brought in for interrogation at Inverness by a couple of detectives sent up from The Smoke (yes, I know):

Work is down a bit. Round about half of what I used to do.

(In the interrogation room)

Me, I’m reacting to the situation. I’ve thrown out an Agony Uncle service.

… “So, about this sword of yours, Mr. Macbeth. It’s not registered at the police station, is it?

It’s called “Moan to Mervyn”. It’s like going to the shrink, but much cheaper, and believe me the cheapness shows.

Used it or brandished it at all lately, have we, sir?

Also available on ProZ.

What’s that, Mr. Macbeth?

At a special ProZ price.

Oh I SEE, only for squirrels around the castle. Did you hear that, Sergeant?

Don’t worry, I’ve already cleared it with Henry.

Squirrels, he says. Come off it, Mr. Macbeth. You can do better than that, sir, surely. Look at the bloody thing, man – it must weigh at least twenty pounds. Squirrels?

And you know you can trust me on this, don't you?

Squirrels scurry up and down trees looking for nuts to scoff, Mr. Macbeth. Squirrels dart comically about everywhere. The jolly little rascals like nothing better than to scamper gaily to and fro all the live long day, sir. What kind of squirrel would you do in with a sword like that, Mr. Macbeth?

Just ask yourself this question: have I ever lied to you?

A squirrel with a broken ankle edging through the undergrowth on crutches?

Anyway, I got my first moan from a bloke yesterday.

A grandad squirrel with a flat cap, asthma and chronic arthritis?

I realise I should qualify that statement right away.

A squirrel caught napping on the bog with his bloody pants down around those little furry legs, Mr. Macbeth?”

What I mean is, by way of an introduction to the service, here’s what he said (all totally anonymous, of course):

“Know what’ll happen when our Forensics confirm microscopic traces of King Duncan’s blood all over that sword, Macbeth?

Dear Mervyn,

Given the circumstances, we might even have you for lese-majesty, too. That’s high treason to you and me, that is. And you know what that means, doncha?

I don’t know who to turn to. I think my wife doesn’t love me anymore.

Means you got yourself a date with the hangman, Mr. Macbeth. It’s only a matter of time before we find Banquo in some ditch out there, too. We got our boys in blue right now scouring the woods over a ten-league radius, we have. Straight up. Going through it all with a fine toothcomb, they are. They don’t miss nothing, you know, our lads. What’s that you say, sir?

We’ve been together for twenty years.

Your alibi?

She was Miss Saffron Walden 1994, you know.

Oh PLEASE. So you’ve got an alibi for that one, Mr. Macbeth. You was tucked up all cosy in bed with Her Indoors, wasn’t you, but what you don’t know is that Murderers One, Two and Three are already singing like canaries in another little room we’ve got right next door here, even as we speak, oh yes. Besides, Mr. Macbeth, by the looks of things your old lady’s testimony will be about as much use to you as a priest’s bollocks. Bonkers, the medics reckon. Lost her marbles. Rabbiting on to herself all day long, she is, rubbing at her hands, screaming “Out, damn spot!” Who’s gonna accept testimony from a raving lunatic, eh?

She’s kept those looks, too.

They’ll laugh her out of court. Know what I see when I look at you, Mr. Macbeth?

I’m still fairly attractive, I suppose, but I have a bit of a paunch and I’ve lost most of my hair, plus I’ve got a bit of a leak and I use a lot of aftershave and that, but most of the time I just can’t get rid of the pissy smell following me around.

A dead man walking, that’s what. A dead man walking.”

The other day we were watching that film Kalifornia, and while Brad Pitt was digging that grave for the bloke he’d just murdered, all naked from the waist up and covered in sweat, I couldn’t help noticing the way she was gawking at the telly like a teenager, eyes all narrowed and mouth slightly open.

“But, before they top you, Mr. Macbeth, you’ll have to do some time first. Oh yes. Ever heard of Barlinnie, have you?

Later she was all lovey-dovey with me, if you know what I mean, but I noticed she kept her eyes tight shut the whole time. I was happy, though, because she made so much noise and threw herself about a lot.

No?

But right after that she asked me if I could go and get her a cigarette and an ashtray from the lounge, and as I was going she asked if I could get her a glass of water from the kitchen too.

Well, it’s a little hotel run by the state. Down Glasgow way. A bit crowded, mind. Lots of big bad boys cooped up in there, son. Dangerous nutcases, some of ‘em, I’d say. Bad news, they are, Mr. Macbeth. Big ugly animals. Nervous primates, like. Smack in their veins, tattoos in their teeth, muscles in their hair, and evil in their blacker than black hearts. I wouldn’t like to be in your shoes when the Daddy claps his eyes on a good-looking bloke like yourself to play doctors and nurses with in the scary scary darkness after lights-out. And in Barlinnie, Mr. Macbeth, you won’t have no big sword like this to play the hard man with neither, will you sir?”

With a slice of lemon and a couple of olives in it, she added as I was going off down the hall, and then she shouted to get her a bacon sarnie too, if I wouldn’t mind.

Dental hygiene

And a bowl of Lays cheese and onion.

fine toothcomb

Well, I got all that together and went back to the bedroom, and found her with her fist in her mouth and the other hand under the covers.

I must admit I spent my first 40 years wondering why people would want to comb their teeth

I suppose she didn't hear me because I was in my bare feet, like, but as soon as she saw me she gave a start, said she wasn’t feeling too well and didn’t want anything at all.

😂

I’m definitely a one-woman man, and I always thought she was too.

Monday 6

Not a one-woman woman, I mean, a one-man woman.

April 08:35

The next day I even asked her if she would pass me over for Brad Pitt, and she said no, of course not, but I saw the hesitation.

“It’s all over!

It didn’t help that the radio was playing "Lying Eyes" at the time. I don’t know whether to believe her or not, but I’m afraid she’s going to leave me. Please help.

Man walks dog. Lion lies down with lamb and church bells ring out as entire world suddenly cured,” crowed the headline.

Best regards,

The alarm rang close to my ear, jolting me awake. “Better go and find out what the real headline says,” I yawned.

Frantic and Fraught

The real one says “Government to carry out en masse tests to locate and isolate those with no symptoms”. And they’re asking large corporations and other organisations to send in a list of premises and spaces, to be used as “Noah’s Ark” separation facilities. Talk about “us and them”.

Dear Frantic and Fraught,

Noah's arc 14:11

I’m not going to beat around the bush here.

Is this the rise of the immune?

The first thing I did when I read your missive was to burst out laughing.

Animal Farm

For God’s sake. We have to admit that all women fall for the likes of Brad Pitt.

15:44

Some say they don’t find him attractive, simply because it makes for a quiet life.

Talking of Noah’s Ark, these days it might be a good idea to keep a watchful eye on any pets you might have. That big shaggy dog asleep over there by the fireplace, for example. He might seem contented and well-disposed and loyal now, wagging that bloody tail of his all the time, panting and wuffing and arf-arfing, larking about with the kids and rolling over on his back to die for the Queen, but you watch your frigging back if things get tough, the Pal and Winalot are being rationed, and there's no more walkies. When push comes to shove, you can forget all that malarkey about man’s best friend, because he’ll be looking out for number one, that’s for sure. And he’s not actually sleeping, either, so watch your mouth, careful what you say about him, and definitely don’t voice any concerns around him, either, because the last thing you want to do is make the bastard nervous. He might seem like he’s dozing, but he opens one eye now and again, and he’s listening to every single word you say. Once he isn’t getting spoilt rotten by the humans, he might just decide to take things into his own paws. So start locking the door of your bedroom when you hit the sack. Might be an idea to put up a hidden camera or two when you get the chance, when he's out of the room. See what he does at night when he thinks nobody’s looking. Might even be ringing up other dogs in the same situation. Once they start pooling all their whines and whimpers, the whole street might face a mutiny if this goes south. Oh, so you think he can’t use a phone just because he doesn’t have opposable thumbs?

In reality, though, they’re thinking about him practically all the time. Imagining his hot, hungry, horny hands sliding up frissoning thighs, impudently ripping off the skimpy flimsy negligee in shards, feeling his breathtaking manliness to the rear, pulsating and throbbing insanely on top of the glowing aching cleft between expectant buttocks, perhaps imagining the scene helplessly as it unfolds in a handy mirror at the head of the bed, hypnotised in the mind’s eye by the stud’s powerful chest muscles and rock-hard rippling six-pack glistening wickedly with a sheen of sweat, oozing out sex from each and every torrid pore, watching him throw back his head and laugh a long, hollow, throaty, devilish laugh, the knuckles whitening and the iron grip tightening on gluteus maximus, gluteus minimus and gluteus inbetweenus, a prize stallion servicing a bucking, rucking, cavorting, contorting, gyrating, palpitating, quivering, shivering, neighing, braying filly from another man's stable.

Think again. Think of all the tricks you taught him. And the other tricks he learnt on his own, but never showed you. Just in case. Biding his time, that’s what he's doing. And you think he can’t talk, either?

If it makes you feel any better, an old girlfriend of mine said to me once I reminded her of David Beckham. Dead chuffed, I was.

Think again. Remember Lassie. Lassie comes running in barking, and the kid says “Hey Pop, I think she’s trying to tell us something!

“Because I’m sporty, handsome, and a huge social and financial success,

What’s wrong, girl?” … woof-woof-woof …“Two people?” … woof-woof-woof … “A man and his little girl?” … woof-woof-woof … “Trapped?” … Trapped where, Lassie?” … woof-woof-woof … “A disused mine shaft?” … “Where, Lassie?

I take it?

Show us where, girl!

I suggested. “Well, no,” she said sweetly, “because he dribbles before he shoots.”

… woof-woof-woof woof-woof-woof woof-woof-woof woof-woof-woof

Now listen to me.

Or that cat up there at the window, occasionally turning her head slowly and deliberately to look at you in undisguised disgust. What’s she staring at out there anyway?

You’ve got to pull yourself together.

Keeping an eye on the humans outside, that’s what. They’re even worse than dogs, because they’re smarter. More independent. You can shout at the dog for leaving his mess in the kitchen or shaking the rain off himself or just because you’ve had a bad day and you feel like bawling him out, and he’ll hang his head and run off and hide, but in five minutes he’ll be back licking your hand. Well, just you try that with her up there at the window. She never liked you anyway. She hated you and the rest of them from the start. She was only there for the Whiskas. You might get away with the rough treatment once, but she won’t forgive you like a dog might do. When you go to the cupboard and suddenly find there’s no cat food left, turn around slowly. Yes, there she is, up at that bloody window, claws out. Watching you.

Or forget about the “together”, even.

Man's best friend

We can’t compete with the likes of Brad, you know. Is she going to leave you?

16:18

Of course not. She’d have done that a long time ago if she could, and even from your brief account it’s obvious she can’t.

Check out these dogs Mervyn

Does she love you?

www.instagram.com/mnishka.707

Do you love her?

My money ...

Maybe it’s time you fought back, sunshine.

16:24

Dig out a Keira Knightley film, and ooh and aah and phwoaar over Keira all the while during it.

... is on the black one. He's about to sink his teeth into the one in front. And if he'd do that to one of his own ...

Watch as she twitches nervously.

Interesting work. Some of it quite disturbing. Is all that yours?

When she asks you afterwards in that sad little-girl-lost voice,

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page13.html

“Would you swap me for Keira Knightley, love?”, you look her straight in the eye and say, “

All mine (stolen)

Are you serious?

Apr 6

Swap you for that Keira?

All of the images are drawings or paintings copied off other works of art or photography composed as an ensemble, it's all in the composition.

Of course I wouldn’t swap you, my darling, my everything.

Just like a musician, there are only so many notes but how you compose them, there in lies the magic.

Not on your life.

Don't you think Hammerhead is magnificent, it can be yours for £100 000, my special friend price.

I’d never swap you.

Local time: 22:44

I’d keep you as a spare.”

Tuesday 7 April

Get HER worried, mate.

Apr 7

See how SHE likes it.

Headline: “Government seeks legal formulae to force asymptomatic isolation”.

Dear Mervyn

And the death count down again, 600 and a bit since yesterday.

I jiked it a lot. I have a problem myself.

It’s all getting a bit repetitive.

I am overcome by a murderous rage every time I spot a typo in a forum post and the offender quietly corrects it before I can comment and get the nitpicking glory.

Work is down a bit. Round about half of what I used to do.

What can I do?

Me, I’m reacting to the situation. I’ve thrown out an Agony Uncle service.

And why do people insist on proofreading their posts only after they post them?

It’s called “Moan to Mervyn”. It’s like going to the shrink, but much cheaper, and believe me the cheapness shows.

Anon, Tunbridge Wells

Also available on ProZ.

Dear Anon, Tunbridge Wells

At a special ProZ price.

My heart goes out to you.

Don’t worry, I’ve already cleared it with Henry.

By God, those people get my goat too.

And you know you can trust me on this, don't you?

I’m afraid the only thing you can do is make a screenshot to produce the damning evidence, and post it online with a shedload of cutting remarks.

Just ask yourself this question: have I ever lied to you?

That'll get you a roaring good start to the day, no matter what.

Anyway, I got my first moan from a bloke yesterday.

Sorted.

I realise I should qualify that statement right away.

Edited for a typo ...

What I mean is, by way of an introduction to the service, here’s what he said (all totally anonymous, of course):

What's the past tense of "jike"?

Dear Mervyn,

I jiked it a lot.

I don’t know who to turn to. I think my wife doesn’t love me anymore.

I have a problem myself.

We’ve been together for twenty years.

Surely it's jike, joke, jaken?

She was Miss Saffron Walden 1994, you know.

PS thanks for not proofreading your post, Chris.

She’s kept those looks, too.

An excellent illustration of your point.

I’m still fairly attractive, I suppose, but I have a bit of a paunch and I’ve lost most of my hair, plus I’ve got a bit of a leak and I use a lot of aftershave and that, but most of the time I just can’t get rid of the pissy smell following me around.

To jike or mot to jike

The other day we were watching that film Kalifornia, and while Brad Pitt was digging that grave for the bloke he’d just murdered, all naked from the waist up and covered in sweat, I couldn’t help noticing the way she was gawking at the telly like a teenager, eyes all narrowed and mouth slightly open.

We’re in tricky territory now.

Later she was all lovey-dovey with me, if you know what I mean, but I noticed she kept her eyes tight shut the whole time. I was happy, though, because she made so much noise and threw herself about a lot.

Did Anon write jiked deliberately to underline their point, accidentally to undermine their point, or ironically to refer to one such corrected typo in another post?

But right after that she asked me if I could go and get her a cigarette and an ashtray from the lounge, and as I was going she asked if I could get her a glass of water from the kitchen too.

And we can’t ask them because we don’t know who they are, so sadly we may never know.

With a slice of lemon and a couple of olives in it, she added as I was going off down the hall, and then she shouted to get her a bacon sarnie too, if I wouldn’t mind.

Great mysteries of our time

And a bowl of Lays cheese and onion.

Sadly indeed.

Well, I got all that together and went back to the bedroom, and found her with her fist in her mouth and the other hand under the covers.

This will now trouble me until my dying day.

I suppose she didn't hear me because I was in my bare feet, like, but as soon as she saw me she gave a start, said she wasn’t feeling too well and didn’t want anything at all.

But don't let that be on your conscience...

I’m definitely a one-woman man, and I always thought she was too.

Youssef Chabat

Not a one-woman woman, I mean, a one-man woman.

Morocco

The next day I even asked her if she would pass me over for Brad Pitt, and she said no, of course not, but I saw the hesitation.

Member (Apr 2020)

It didn’t help that the radio was playing "Lying Eyes" at the time. I don’t know whether to believe her or not, but I’m afraid she’s going to leave me. Please help.

English to Arabic

Best regards,

staying home

Frantic and Fraught

As far as I'm concerned, I've just had a back surgery for a herniated disc, so these restrictive measures just help me stay home with no regrets as I see other people who have no health problems do. but it always feels like in prison if you see what I mean. looking through the window and seeing nobody, is just enough awkward. the thing I like about this tough period is this kind of humanitarian collaboration.

Dear Frantic and Fraught,

Everybody is concerned about humanity, families are gathered, AGAIN, and getting to know each other better.

I’m not going to beat around the bush here.

Wednesday 8 April (jike-joke-jaken and teach-teached-teached)

The first thing I did when I read your missive was to burst out laughing.

07:13

For God’s sake. We have to admit that all women fall for the likes of Brad Pitt.

Doomsday headline today: “Rementeria [president of the provincial council in Vizcaya] warns that ‘the worst is yet to come’ this week for senior citizens’ homes”.

Some say they don’t find him attractive, simply because it makes for a quiet life.

Bloody hell. Good job Easter’s just around the corner.

In reality, though, they’re thinking about him practically all the time. Imagining his hot, hungry, horny hands sliding up frissoning thighs, impudently ripping off the skimpy flimsy negligee in shards, feeling his breathtaking manliness to the rear, pulsating and throbbing insanely on top of the glowing aching cleft between expectant buttocks, perhaps imagining the scene helplessly as it unfolds in a handy mirror at the head of the bed, hypnotised in the mind’s eye by the stud’s powerful chest muscles and rock-hard rippling six-pack glistening wickedly with a sheen of sweat, oozing out sex from each and every torrid pore, watching him throw back his head and laugh a long, hollow, throaty, devilish laugh, the knuckles whitening and the iron grip tightening on gluteus maximus, gluteus minimus and gluteus inbetweenus, a prize stallion servicing a bucking, rucking, cavorting, contorting, gyrating, palpitating, quivering, shivering, neighing, braying filly from another man's stable.

Oh no, I forgot, it’s not.

If it makes you feel any better, an old girlfriend of mine said to me once I reminded her of David Beckham. Dead chuffed, I was.

It’s cancelled.

“Because I’m sporty, handsome, and a huge social and financial success,

No pointy-hats this year. And I probably have to head on down to El Corte Inglés today like everyone else because, in Euskadi, Maundy Thursday (worra daft name) is a holiday as well as Good Friday.

I take it?

The recent banter between Andrew and Chris S reminds me of a funny story.

I suggested. “Well, no,” she said sweetly, “because he dribbles before he shoots.”

Or rather, it starts off as a solemn little story, but it gets better near the end.

Now listen to me.

Five years ago I went back to Northern Ireland to scatter my portion of my mother’s ashes in the sea, near where she grew up.

You’ve got to pull yourself together.

Over the previous ten years I’d been there back and forth to visit and help out for a week at a time, two weeks, whatever (bringing the office with me, if you know what I mean, sitting in the lounge, her watching the telly and me typing out my blaargh ...), and one entire August, to the extent that on the last occasions I went there I could have screamed out of Dublin airport in the hire car and negotiated the drive to her flat up in the Frozen North on the M1 and the M2 blindfold, but on that occasion it had been a long time since I’d been there, almost two years.

Or forget about the “together”, even.

The successive options of neighbours giving a hand, state carers looking in three times a day and making meals, and live-in helper had finally exhausted themselves for a wheelchair-bound case who needed 24/7 assistance. She still had her head in place, though.

We can’t compete with the likes of Brad, you know. Is she going to leave you?

As some of you out there may know, that isn’t always an advantage, because they know what’s going on, don’t they, and in my mother’s case especially, since she had been a GP back in the day.

Of course not. She’d have done that a long time ago if she could, and even from your brief account it’s obvious she can’t.

So she came over here to live, and spent almost two years here, but really she came here to die, I suppose.

Does she love you?

Which she did, rather “unexpectedly” too, just after I’d gone back - again - to spend 10 days on my own packing up her flat and signing over the deeds to the flat.

Do you love her?

Sometimes I think that’s what she was waiting for, for everything to be wrapped up.

Maybe it’s time you fought back, sunshine.

So anyway down I went to the cold, cold sea in Ballycastle, did the scattering, had a couple of pints of Guinness to her health in the Marine Hotel afterwards, and then went to check out her family’s old house, and the old school she’d taught at briefly before she went to university, neither of which I’d seen since I was about 12.

Dig out a Keira Knightley film, and ooh and aah and phwoaar over Keira all the while during it.

I had no idea of the terrain, and had to ask an old lady digging in her garden.

Watch as she twitches nervously.

If anyone is familiar with the geography, my mum’s old stamping ground was the Ballycastle hinterland. It could have been other places with the same syndrome I’m about to explain, but that’s where it was.

When she asks you afterwards in that sad little-girl-lost voice,

My dad was from a different place right in the centre of Northern Ireland, and it was the same there.

“Would you swap me for Keira Knightley, love?”, you look her straight in the eye and say, “

The farming folk round about may well be the salt of the earth, like many rural areas, but if you want to work elsewhere, better change your accent and change your diction.

Are you serious?

I’m sure rural Wales and other places have the same scenario.

Swap you for that Keira?

When I explained what I was looking for and mentioned the maiden name, she straightened up over her spade:

Of course I wouldn’t swap you, my darling, my everything.

“Aye,” she said, “I remember her all right.

Not on your life.

She teached me at the school down the road there.”

I’d never swap you.

Teached?

I’d keep you as a spare.”

I was so surprised, I said to her with the automatic correction:

Get HER worried, mate.

“Really?

See how SHE likes it.

So she taught you?”

Dear Mervyn

That woman looked at me like she’d never heard the word before.

I jiked it a lot. I have a problem myself.

And I think she hadn’t.

I am overcome by a murderous rage every time I spot a typo in a forum post and the offender quietly corrects it before I can comment and get the nitpicking glory.

“Oh aye, she teached me.”

What can I do?

At first I thought, Jesus, how can they TALK like that?

And why do people insist on proofreading their posts only after they post them?

Teached. Teached!

Anon, Tunbridge Wells

Teached, for God’s sake!

Dear Anon, Tunbridge Wells

But as I was mulling it over to myself on the drive back, the more I said it to myself, the more reasonable it sounded.

My heart goes out to you.

Why not teached?

By God, those people get my goat too.

What’s so special about the verb to teach that you have to make it irregular?

I’m afraid the only thing you can do is make a screenshot to produce the damning evidence, and post it online with a shedload of cutting remarks.

And it could have been perfectly regular, too, if they’d just left it alone – teach, teached, teached.

That'll get you a roaring good start to the day, no matter what.

Occasionally I think the same about Spanish verbs – andar, caber – what’s the point of making them irregular?

Sorted.

The verbs to go and to be and a few others are irregular in both languages, but “to teach”?

Edited for a typo ...

Such an ordinary run-of-the-mill verb.

What's the past tense of "jike"?

Who decides this stuff?

I jiked it a lot.

Someone with a consistency problem

I have a problem myself.

10:56

Surely it's jike, joke, jaken?

Teached.

PS thanks for not proofreading your post, Chris.

Teached!

An excellent illustration of your point.

Yes, because even if we looked into all the old Germanic forms and made a detailed exposé based on diphthongs and consonant clusters, we'd still have to ask why those changes apply only to certain verbs.

To jike or mot to jike

I preach

We’re in tricky territory now.

I praught

Did Anon write jiked deliberately to underline their point, accidentally to undermine their point, or ironically to refer to one such corrected typo in another post?

I have praught?

And we can’t ask them because we don’t know who they are, so sadly we may never know.

Leach, laught, laught?

Great mysteries of our time

And if it applies to catch, why not to latch or hatch?

Sadly indeed.

The chicken haught, then instinctively laught on to its mother?

This will now trouble me until my dying day.

I think the committee was having an off-day the day they decided on that issue...

But don't let that be on your conscience...

PS Mervyn, dost thou speak with a Nornireland accent?

Youssef Chabat

Woe betide anyone called Andrew who ever has a girlfriend from Belfast...

Morocco

(Unless he actually prefers being called Orndriuw or some close approximation thereof).

Member (Apr 2020)

Fessing up 10:59

English to Arabic

PPS I added the PS after posting the first time.

staying home

Getting philosophical

As far as I'm concerned, I've just had a back surgery for a herniated disc, so these restrictive measures just help me stay home with no regrets as I see other people who have no health problems do. but it always feels like in prison if you see what I mean. looking through the window and seeing nobody, is just enough awkward. the thing I like about this tough period is this kind of humanitarian collaboration.

12:01

Everybody is concerned about humanity, families are gathered, AGAIN, and getting to know each other better.

No offence, Mervyn, but she didn’t taught this woman very well...

Wednesday 8 April (jike-joke-jaken and teach-teached-teached)

All languages are stupid.

07:13

All unnecessarily complex.

Doomsday headline today: “Rementeria [president of the provincial council in Vizcaya] warns that ‘the worst is yet to come’ this week for senior citizens’ homes”.

Too many rules, too many words.

Bloody hell. Good job Easter’s just around the corner.

Take Welsh. “Yn” means “in”.

Oh no, I forgot, it’s not.

“Cymru” means “Wales”.

It’s cancelled.

But “in Wales” is not “yn Cymru”.

No pointy-hats this year. And I probably have to head on down to El Corte Inglés today like everyone else because, in Euskadi, Maundy Thursday (worra daft name) is a holiday as well as Good Friday.

Oh no, that would be too easy.

The recent banter between Andrew and Chris S reminds me of a funny story.

Apparently “yng Nghymru” trips off the tongue more easily.

Or rather, it starts off as a solemn little story, but it gets better near the end.

(Trips and breaks its hip more like.)

Five years ago I went back to Northern Ireland to scatter my portion of my mother’s ashes in the sea, near where she grew up.

Language is supposed to be about communication and bringing people together, but it’s the most divisive thing out there.

Over the previous ten years I’d been there back and forth to visit and help out for a week at a time, two weeks, whatever (bringing the office with me, if you know what I mean, sitting in the lounge, her watching the telly and me typing out my blaargh ...), and one entire August, to the extent that on the last occasions I went there I could have screamed out of Dublin airport in the hire car and negotiated the drive to her flat up in the Frozen North on the M1 and the M2 blindfold, but on that occasion it had been a long time since I’d been there, almost two years.

Even beats religion.

The successive options of neighbours giving a hand, state carers looking in three times a day and making meals, and live-in helper had finally exhausted themselves for a wheelchair-bound case who needed 24/7 assistance. She still had her head in place, though.

There should only be one language.

As some of you out there may know, that isn’t always an advantage, because they know what’s going on, don’t they, and in my mother’s case especially, since she had been a GP back in the day.

Why am I even in this job?

So she came over here to live, and spent almost two years here, but really she came here to die, I suppose.

Mutants'R'Us

Which she did, rather “unexpectedly” too, just after I’d gone back - again - to spend 10 days on my own packing up her flat and signing over the deeds to the flat.

12:04

Sometimes I think that’s what she was waiting for, for everything to be wrapped up.

Take Welsh. “Yn” means “in”. “Cymru” means “Wales”. But “in Wales” is not “yn Cymru”.

So anyway down I went to the cold, cold sea in Ballycastle, did the scattering, had a couple of pints of Guinness to her health in the Marine Hotel afterwards, and then went to check out her family’s old house, and the old school she’d taught at briefly before she went to university, neither of which I’d seen since I was about 12.

Even Welsh speakers (and I am one) are sometimes bamboozled by "treigladau" (mutations).

I had no idea of the terrain, and had to ask an old lady digging in her garden.

Your homework for tomorrow, digest and memorise this:

If anyone is familiar with the geography, my mum’s old stamping ground was the Ballycastle hinterland. It could have been other places with the same syndrome I’m about to explain, but that’s where it was.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/learnwelsh/pdf/welshgrammar\_mutations.pdf

My dad was from a different place right in the centre of Northern Ireland, and it was the same there.

Norn Iron

The farming folk round about may well be the salt of the earth, like many rural areas, but if you want to work elsewhere, better change your accent and change your diction.

I do, in fact, still have the largely unintelligible NI accent, although it's mellowed over the years due to less contact with my origins and the economic necessity to be understood in the language I teached for a few years over here, like everyone else.

I’m sure rural Wales and other places have the same scenario.

Oh dear, "teached" - see that?

When I explained what I was looking for and mentioned the maiden name, she straightened up over her spade:

See how easy it is to fall into it?

“Aye,” she said, “I remember her all right.

See how easy it could have been?

She teached me at the school down the road there.”

Or could have "beed"?

Teached?

I'm secretly proud of my accent, I suppose, but over the years you get tired of repeating things, and especially to people who supposedly speak the same language as you do.

I was so surprised, I said to her with the automatic correction:

Mostly we could always understand them, because we had the Yanks and the Taffs and the Scots and the English, broken down into Scousers and Geordies and Brummies, and all the rest on the TV as we were growing up, but nobody ever gave NI accents any space on national telly!!

“Really?

No wonder.

So she taught you?”

Too harsh and rasping to compete against the largely melodious brogues you might come across Down South.

That woman looked at me like she’d never heard the word before.

Although, having said that, you walk around parts of Cork or West Cork and you might not get much of what the locals say either.

And I think she hadn’t.

But mine was never as unintelligible as that of others.

“Oh aye, she teached me.”

When I was in my midteens I worked at a restaurant only two miles from my town, and they also had a farm I had to work on too, feeding the pigs mostly.

At first I thought, Jesus, how can they TALK like that?

Suffice it to say that at the restaurant I struggled at first to even understand my co-workers, and as for the farmers right back even further at the point where the arse end of nowhere begins, it was literally like another language.

Teached. Teached!

Now that particular accent I never had.

Teached, for God’s sake!

Welsh 12:26

But as I was mulling it over to myself on the drive back, the more I said it to myself, the more reasonable it sounded.

Scary stuff.

Why not teached?

Well, I had an idea Welsh was scary, but that proves it.

What’s so special about the verb to teach that you have to make it irregular?

And, to enhance Chris S's example of "in Wales", I see even the letters change depending on what follows, like Gaelic.

And it could have been perfectly regular, too, if they’d just left it alone – teach, teached, teached.

Now there's a confusing concept.

Occasionally I think the same about Spanish verbs – andar, caber – what’s the point of making them irregular?

Although I must say I am interested in knowing how you pronounce "yng Nghymru".

The verbs to go and to be and a few others are irregular in both languages, but “to teach”?

No use asking those new arrivals at the caravan sites outside Lampeter, I suppose ...

Such an ordinary run-of-the-mill verb.

page14.html

Who decides this stuff?

How could you forget John Cole?

Someone with a consistency problem

:D

10:56

Apr 8

Teached.

Surely one of the first to burst through the Clipped-tone Curtain when the RP Wall fell?

Teached!

My accent started out as Welsh as they come, even though my parents tried to heducate (sic) us to speak proper, like.

Yes, because even if we looked into all the old Germanic forms and made a detailed exposé based on diphthongs and consonant clusters, we'd still have to ask why those changes apply only to certain verbs.

At Oxford it only got stronger, because I was chippy and had a point to prove, surrounded by nothing but Brideshead wannabes.

I preach

But then years and years of life abroad, teaching English to furriners, listening to furriners, and even spending much time speaking furrin languages chiselled away at my diction, until my accent became what it is today: a mishmash that nobody, but nobody, can place.

I praught

Once, on a return trip to visit my parents in Llanelli, a tennis ball sailed over the wall from the park next door.

I have praught?

And some ragamuffin kid out of Dickens clambered down our side of the wall.

Leach, laught, laught?

He said "Have you seen a tennis ball round here?" and I swear my only reply was "Didn't see where it went."

And if it applies to catch, why not to latch or hatch?

He stopped short, looked at me quizzically and asked "Where are you from, you sound foreign!"

The chicken haught, then instinctively laught on to its mother?

And no, he didn't have a PhD in Phonology.

I think the committee was having an off-day the day they decided on that issue...

I have been asked over the years if I am Dutch (thousands of times), South African (hundreds), German (dozens), and Jamaican (once).

PS Mervyn, dost thou speak with a Nornireland accent?

Funnily enough, the one-timer was smart – a white Jamaican accent sounds uncannily like a Welsh one.

Woe betide anyone called Andrew who ever has a girlfriend from Belfast...

And once in a blue moon, someone says "Are you Welsh?", whereupon they become my instant friend forever.

(Unless he actually prefers being called Orndriuw or some close approximation thereof).

Ung humree

Fessing up 10:59

Well the whole point of mutations is that they react to what goes before (not afterwards in fact, although they may then bring about a retrospective effect on what went before – it's kind of circular).

PPS I added the PS after posting the first time.

So certain prepositions, adjectives and the definite article all make the beginning of the following word mutate.

Getting philosophical

As for yng Nghymru

12:01

think of "bung" and take off the b.

No offence, Mervyn, but she didn’t taught this woman very well...

then just say "humree" (not a northern British hum, like hoom, but a southern one).

All languages are stupid.

ung humree. Easy!

All unnecessarily complex.

Beed Apr 8

Too many rules, too many words.

My children, aged 16 and 18 and both very academic, still occasionally use “bees” as the present tense of the verb “to be” in a specific grammatical context where there genuinely is no alternative to saying “bees”.

Take Welsh. “Yn” means “in”.

Sadly for this anecdote I can’t remember for the life of me what it is, but it does at least give me the chance to share my favourite past tense that all the kids seem to use around here: jamp.

“Cymru” means “Wales”.

Awwww...

But “in Wales” is not “yn Cymru”.

Local time: 14:16

Oh no, that would be too easy.

OK ...

Apparently “yng Nghymru” trips off the tongue more easily.

... ung humree. Thanks, Andrew!

(Trips and breaks its hip more like.)

Now, bear in mind that I'm whiling away the time here until lunch, I have 5K to do but I couldn't give a toss about it until at least tomorrow because the virus seems to have put all deadlines back to next week in the Spanish State, and I'm clearly pissing about, how do you say "Oh, here we are in New South Wales, shearing sheep as big as whales" in Welsh?

Language is supposed to be about communication and bringing people together, but it’s the most divisive thing out there.

Just editing for no particular reason, Chris!

Even beats religion.

Keep you on your toes ...

There should only be one language.

Weirdly, New South Wales has no translation, although technically "De Cymru Newydd"

Why am I even in this job?

how do you say "Oh, here we are in New South Wales, shearing sheep as big as whales" in Welsh?

Mutants'R'Us

O, dyma ni yn New South Wales, yn cneifio defaid mor fawr â morfilod

12:04

Well done

Take Welsh. “Yn” means “in”. “Cymru” means “Wales”. But “in Wales” is not “yn Cymru”.

Good one!

Even Welsh speakers (and I am one) are sometimes bamboozled by "treigladau" (mutations).

Yacky da!

Your homework for tomorrow, digest and memorise this:

I know the spelling's approximate ...

https://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/learnwelsh/pdf/welshgrammar\_mutations.pdf

🧄

Norn Iron

Cymro cymraeg wyt ti, Andrew?

I do, in fact, still have the largely unintelligible NI accent, although it's mellowed over the years due to less contact with my origins and the economic necessity to be understood in the language I teached for a few years over here, like everyone else.

Wel, wel.

Oh dear, "teached" - see that?

I have no problem with Welsh mutants, numerous as they are, but the Garlic is one step beyond with all those mysterious extra letters.

See how easy it is to fall into it?

The only word I know is my own name: Cheamysioealaghlaoghaiimeadeilaghaghhagh.

See how easy it could have been?

We are drifting off topic, however.

Or could have "beed"?

This is not a time to jest with our Great Leader battling the Kung Flu.

I'm secretly proud of my accent, I suppose, but over the years you get tired of repeating things, and especially to people who supposedly speak the same language as you do.

But no worries, “he’s a fighter”, unlike the 10,000 plus who presumably ran up the white flag at first sight of the 🦠 in the manner of Scooby and Shaggy.

Mostly we could always understand them, because we had the Yanks and the Taffs and the Scots and the English, broken down into Scousers and Geordies and Brummies, and all the rest on the TV as we were growing up, but nobody ever gave NI accents any space on national telly!!

Meanwhile the sun keeps shining, the sheep bleating, and the farmer screaming at Shep to effing well come by you effing bugger as his flock fails to social-distance into the next field.

No wonder.

Local time: 13:16

Too harsh and rasping to compete against the largely melodious brogues you might come across Down South.

Bad and very sad news for me

Although, having said that, you walk around parts of Cork or West Cork and you might not get much of what the locals say either.

Today, one of my sisters, who is a nurse in one of the main hospitals in Porto, received his positive test for Covid-19. It's true this virus gathered families, but only through a glass, a screen, by a letter, with a phone call.

But mine was never as unintelligible as that of others.

Being at her side in this moment would be my wish, but I can't. I hope she will overcome this, and recover soon!

When I was in my midteens I worked at a restaurant only two miles from my town, and they also had a farm I had to work on too, feeding the pigs mostly.

Please stay safe and healthy!

Suffice it to say that at the restaurant I struggled at first to even understand my co-workers, and as for the farmers right back even further at the point where the arse end of nowhere begins, it was literally like another language.

Stay at home if you can!

Now that particular accent I never had.

Don't despair

Welsh 12:26

Expressisverbis, a lot of people who test positive just have a bad time for a while, and then they're all right again.

Scary stuff.

Think positive.

Well, I had an idea Welsh was scary, but that proves it.

It'll be fine.

And, to enhance Chris S's example of "in Wales", I see even the letters change depending on what follows, like Gaelic.

Meanwhile, like your message says:

Now there's a confusing concept.

STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME ...

Although I must say I am interested in knowing how you pronounce "yng Nghymru".

Many thanks, Mervyn

No use asking those new arrivals at the caravan sites outside Lampeter, I suppose ...

Think positive. It'll be fine. Meanwhile, like your message says:

page14.html

Yes, I am confident!

How could you forget John Cole?

I was expecting somehow this news, but... at the same time with hope she wasn't infected.

:D

Hospitals are sources of infections; doctors, nurses, and all the teams who work there are always exposed, and mostly now. We own them our gratitude and respect, as well as other professionals.

Apr 8

Yes, we should stay home, and I am complying with the recommendations.

Surely one of the first to burst through the Clipped-tone Curtain when the RP Wall fell?

Please stay safe everyone!

My accent started out as Welsh as they come, even though my parents tried to heducate (sic) us to speak proper, like.

PS: Btw, I don't understand it, and I believe you're writing in Welsh (?), it's a nice language.

At Oxford it only got stronger, because I was chippy and had a point to prove, surrounded by nothing but Brideshead wannabes.

Wyrd oft nereð unfægne eorl, ϸonne his ellen deah

But then years and years of life abroad, teaching English to furriners, listening to furriners, and even spending much time speaking furrin languages chiselled away at my diction, until my accent became what it is today: a mishmash that nobody, but nobody, can place.

Thursday 9 April

Once, on a return trip to visit my parents in Llanelli, a tennis ball sailed over the wall from the park next door.

Apr 9

And some ragamuffin kid out of Dickens clambered down our side of the wall.

“Deaths in Euskadi up by two thirds against the norm over the last two weeks”.

He said "Have you seen a tennis ball round here?" and I swear my only reply was "Didn't see where it went."

So now we have a norm.

He stopped short, looked at me quizzically and asked "Where are you from, you sound foreign!"

We had a few days there when deaths in Spain were going down, then they went up again, and now they’re on their way back down at 757 yesterday.

And no, he didn't have a PhD in Phonology.

No sign of our neighbour yet. Hope she’s not one of them.

I have been asked over the years if I am Dutch (thousands of times), South African (hundreds), German (dozens), and Jamaican (once).

But let’s not confine ourselves (a weak pun, I know) to our immediate environment.

Funnily enough, the one-timer was smart – a white Jamaican accent sounds uncannily like a Welsh one.

Over in Nicaragua, I see that Daniel and Her Indoors don’t seem too worried about it all.

And once in a blue moon, someone says "Are you Welsh?", whereupon they become my instant friend forever.

Quite the contrary, in fact, organising mass full-contact coronavirus street demos in solidarity with other countries suffering the effects. I must admit I have difficulty believing this.

Ung humree

Perhaps translators in the country could confirm?

Well the whole point of mutations is that they react to what goes before (not afterwards in fact, although they may then bring about a retrospective effect on what went before – it's kind of circular).

And what about North Korea?

So certain prepositions, adjectives and the definite article all make the beginning of the following word mutate.

Last I heard, the triumphant news was that they had zero patients.

As for yng Nghymru

The words “of”, “large”, “salt” and “pinch” come to mind, although not necessarily in that order, of course.

think of "bung" and take off the b.

KJU has a good track record of success keeping infectious ideas at bay with drastic means, so maybe it’s the same with viruses.

then just say "humree" (not a northern British hum, like hoom, but a southern one).

Perhaps translators in the country could also … well, no, perhaps not.

ung humree. Easy!

Now there’s a country that’s going to reveal some horrendous stories when the shit finally hits the fan.

Beed Apr 8

Back later with some vaguely amusing bollocks to take your mind off it.

My children, aged 16 and 18 and both very academic, still occasionally use “bees” as the present tense of the verb “to be” in a specific grammatical context where there genuinely is no alternative to saying “bees”.

Hopefully.

Sadly for this anecdote I can’t remember for the life of me what it is, but it does at least give me the chance to share my favourite past tense that all the kids seem to use around here: jamp.

Maybe.

Awwww...

Who knows.

Local time: 14:16

And don’t forget tomorrow’s Cookery Friday, either.

OK ...

A classic recipe.

... ung humree. Thanks, Andrew!

Rancid tradition.

Now, bear in mind that I'm whiling away the time here until lunch, I have 5K to do but I couldn't give a toss about it until at least tomorrow because the virus seems to have put all deadlines back to next week in the Spanish State, and I'm clearly pissing about, how do you say "Oh, here we are in New South Wales, shearing sheep as big as whales" in Welsh?

Oh all right, I haven’t even thought about it yet, but I’ll come up with something.

Just editing for no particular reason, Chris!

I usually do.

Keep you on your toes ...

That’s my problem.

Weirdly, New South Wales has no translation, although technically "De Cymru Newydd"

Back to 3K on bugger knows what … let’s see, oh … a takeover bid.

how do you say "Oh, here we are in New South Wales, shearing sheep as big as whales" in Welsh?

Says here it’s going to be a humongous deal for all stakeholders.

O, dyma ni yn New South Wales, yn cneifio defaid mor fawr â morfilod

Right.

Well done

Bored, bored, bored

Good one!

God, I’m bored.

Yacky da!

Still unable to do all that work on my desk or do much else except watch those piles grow and waste time surfing on my phone.

I know the spelling's approximate ...

And today there was even nothing of interest on ProZ.

🧄

No nonsense from Mervyn; no nonsense from the nutters and grumps of this shire. I ended up battling my way through a two-part profile of ProZ’s Great Leader which just wasn’t quite sycophantic enough to be a parody.

Cymro cymraeg wyt ti, Andrew?

And when I hit rock bottom I even checked out the ongoing Success Summit conferency thing.

Wel, wel.

Now is it just me or...

I have no problem with Welsh mutants, numerous as they are, but the Garlic is one step beyond with all those mysterious extra letters.

... do other people also find it absolutely mind-numbing watching webcam footage of people with tinny voices spending half their time fixing technical glitches and then taking 30 minutes to run through a set of bullet points that I had already skimmed and absorbed in 30 seconds?

The only word I know is my own name: Cheamysioealaghlaoghaiimeadeilaghaghhagh.

As translators, wouldn’t we be better served by the same information (which could well be very insightful) being presented in written form rather than slo-mo video?

We are drifting off topic, however.

Nonsense

This is not a time to jest with our Great Leader battling the Kung Flu.

These are hurtful words, Chris.

But no worries, “he’s a fighter”, unlike the 10,000 plus who presumably ran up the white flag at first sight of the 🦠 in the manner of Scooby and Shaggy.

Sad to realise one is seen as naught but a purveyor of poppycock by appointment.

Meanwhile the sun keeps shining, the sheep bleating, and the farmer screaming at Shep to effing well come by you effing bugger as his flock fails to social-distance into the next field.

There's bugger all going on around here either, if it's any consolation.

Local time: 13:16

I was reading a bit of Shakey by the window earlier, but couldn't concentrate because there's a lot of trumpet-parping and drum-banging going on from the balconies as people try to do Easter as best they can without the usual pointy-hat processions winding solemnly through the streets.

Bad and very sad news for me

Be more creative

Today, one of my sisters, who is a nurse in one of the main hospitals in Porto, received his positive test for Covid-19. It's true this virus gathered families, but only through a glass, a screen, by a letter, with a phone call.

God, I’m bored. Still unable to do all that work on my desk or do much else except watch those piles grow and waste time surfing on my phone.

Being at her side in this moment would be my wish, but I can't. I hope she will overcome this, and recover soon!

I procrastinated manfully by trudging down to my woodland and felling a few trees.

Please stay safe and healthy!

Lovely day for it.

Stay at home if you can!

Meanwhile, a project sits in my folder, watching me balefully.

Don't despair

To be bored or not to be

Expressisverbis, a lot of people who test positive just have a bad time for a while, and then they're all right again.

Oddly enough the beginning of my April has been very busy, much of it with work from a US home entertainment manufacturer. Some of us are lucky to have end clients that continue to operate during the crisis. But from Europe it's pretty dead. Fortunately I haven't found the time to be bored recently. But who knows where it's all going?

Think positive.

Chris, since you complain about absent grumps, allow me to encourage you by complaining about the missing comma after 'great leader', as what follows is a non-restrictive clause. I hope it isn't becoming a more widespread Welsh pastime to sabotage the English language. 😁

It'll be fine.

Dan, once the quarantines and other restrictions are gone, you shall be more than welcome to practice and demonstrate your excellent and valuable tree-felling skills here on my ex-GDR smallholding. I have four dead medium-to-large pines that need to be removed before they fall on their own. To judge by their size, they may well have been planted before the war (don't mention it here). Well, I'll probably end up having to pay some local company to do it, as the pines are way too big for a normal chainsaw and no matter where they fall, they'll damage something. At least I got rid of some prickly shrubs, whatever the damn things are called – in any case a thorny issue.

Meanwhile, like your message says:

The dark world of my billionaire lifestyle

STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME STAY AT HOME ...

An article on the BBC App, a great read, poor Sergai is down to his last £70 million, nearly had me in tears.

Many thanks, Mervyn

Overcoming overcommaing

Think positive. It'll be fine. Meanwhile, like your message says:

Well, Tom, oops, Thomas, much as I admire and appreciate such a noble foray into the fine Britannic tradition of pointless grammatical nit-picking, we may have to agree to disagree here.

Yes, I am confident!

Although I was on my phone, which would automatically half-excuse an abominable error of this kind, I am relieved on further review to see that said clause is in fact restrictive, so the absence of a comma is not just correct but crucial.

I was expecting somehow this news, but... at the same time with hope she wasn't infected.

Of course, our country cousins across the water would claim that I must therefore use that not which, but I would counter that that that is optional in proper English and that that that rule is a colonial aberration.

Hospitals are sources of infections; doctors, nurses, and all the teams who work there are always exposed, and mostly now. We own them our gratitude and respect, as well as other professionals.

Much, of course, is personal. I for one cannot abide the Oxford comma, which to my eyes is as American as it gets, whatever its origins; yet the number one nit-picker of this parish swings the other way.

Yes, we should stay home, and I am complying with the recommendations.

(Here’s a thought: Is a lousy nit-picker good or bad at their job?)

Please stay safe everyone!

In all seriousness, though, Thomas, I do greatly admire your English. One suspects that if we were to meet, one might not have to shout slowly at you at all.

PS: Btw, I don't understand it, and I believe you're writing in Welsh (?), it's a nice language.

Over- or undercommaing observations

Wyrd oft nereð unfægne eorl, ϸonne his ellen deah

Hmm, I was under the distinct impression that the Proz bunker had only one Great Leader, so a clause to identify which one would seem pointless, which means, incidentally, that that sentence should not be commaless but comma inclusive.

Thursday 9 April

And now we’re nitpicking, since you were quite clearly suffering from a bout of grumpiness withdrawal symptoms (which I’m graciously trying to relieve), we could debate whether nitpicking should be spelt nit-picking.

Apr 9

We could also, for now, put a full stop to this pointless debate, which would thus no longer be pointless – or should I say fullstopless – as from the point at which said full stop was pointed out.

“Deaths in Euskadi up by two thirds against the norm over the last two weeks”.

That that which which you referred to was not a that, but a which (which many Telegraph journalists would presumably spell ‘witch’ – just today they wrote about the coronavirus situation: ‘if people do not head the warnings’, which sounds like an interesting spectacle to behold, people heading warnings around in a park or elsewhere, which would presumably get them arrested for flouting social-distancing rules – but I’m digressing) would obviously confuse an American, but on our shores it’s quite obvious that that that that you discussed is optional and may be freely substituted by a which which may not be preceded by a comma, which would completely change the meaning.

So now we have a norm.

It’s quite an interesting observation that the Oxford comma can be called American, since Oxford, i.e. the original one, not the many pirate copies in the US and elsewhere, does appear to be quite English, but nevertheless Americans do indeed seem to be enamoured with this particular Oxford feature, whereas the British aren’t. I’m not a fan of it either. I wonder if at any point in time a homecommaing campaign has been attempted for the purpose of reintroducing the Oxford comma to Oxford and its surroundings, but the government would probably find a way to tax or quarantine such an American reimport.

We had a few days there when deaths in Spain were going down, then they went up again, and now they’re on their way back down at 757 yesterday.

You asked, ‘Here’s a thought: Is a lousy nit-picker good or bad at their job?’ It’s a tricky question indeed. I guess it depends on what the nitpicker’s job is and what said nitpicker’s job performance is, since being a nitpicker (with or without a hyphen) doesn’t imply that the nitpicker’s job is to nitpick stuff that may or may not need to be nitpicked.

No sign of our neighbour yet. Hope she’s not one of them.

Your closing remark was: ‘In all seriousness, though, Thomas, I do greatly admire your English. One suspects that if we were to meet, one might not have to shout slowly at you at all.’

But let’s not confine ourselves (a weak pun, I know) to our immediate environment.

Thank you. That’s good to hear. Yours isn’t too bad either, if I may say so, notwithstanding any pointless comma issues. Shouting slowly might not be quite necessary. Maybe just shouting or talking slowly would be sufficient. Shouting would just frighten my cat, by the way. I can talk about my multilingual feline vocabulary another time. For now, let me just give a single example of how I rationalised saying ‘meow out’ to her when she’s about to go out, by trimming it to just ‘me-out’. My daughter insists that it’s not because she understands it she then goes out, but because she was about to go out anyway.

Over in Nicaragua, I see that Daniel and Her Indoors don’t seem too worried about it all.

Should you wish to assist Dan’s potential Teutonic tree-felling endeavours, you’ll be very welcome. If you warn me in advance, I can be sure to procure a megaphone.

Quite the contrary, in fact, organising mass full-contact coronavirus street demos in solidarity with other countries suffering the effects. I must admit I have difficulty believing this.

Balasubramaniam L.

Perhaps translators in the country could confirm?

India

And what about North Korea?

Local time: 10:51

Last I heard, the triumphant news was that they had zero patients.

English to Hindi

The words “of”, “large”, “salt” and “pinch” come to mind, although not necessarily in that order, of course.

Update from Mumbai

KJU has a good track record of success keeping infectious ideas at bay with drastic means, so maybe it’s the same with viruses.

Apr 10

Perhaps translators in the country could also … well, no, perhaps not.

Today is the 17th day of a 21-day lock-out called by our PM Narendra Modi. Looking back, time seems to have flown - so much has happened that I hardly noticed the turning of the leaves of the calendar.

Now there’s a country that’s going to reveal some horrendous stories when the shit finally hits the fan.

My daughter is in the 12th standard, unfortunately for her, the last of her exams got postponed due to the lockout. Many of the competitive exams she will be appearing in May-June (like the IIT entrance exam) have also been postponed - indefinitely. Although she is quite thrilled at the extended "vacation", we are really concerned about her future, as there is a good chance that she might lose a whole academic year.

Back later with some vaguely amusing bollocks to take your mind off it.

She sleeps most of the time, and binge-watches videos. We don't grudge her this "lucky" break, as for the last two years she has really slogged with her studies, what with full-time school followed by 4-5 hours of tuition every day. She would leave home at 7 am and come back only at night at 9 or 10 pm. Then there word be home work and assignments to complete, which means she would stay up till 1 am in the night and sometimes even later. We were really concerned about her health.

Hopefully.

I soon decided that the "vacation" should be put to good use for her. So I have enrolled her into a Sanskrit learning course of Sanskrit Bharati and am teaching her basic Sanskrit for an hour every day. It is amazing how fast kids pick up a new language, although Sanskrit is not exactly "new" to Indians, as all modern Indian languages are derived from Sanskrit.

Maybe.

I too enrolled myself for a full time MA in Sanskrit last August, so I too am into full-time Sanskrit studies during the two years of sabbatical I have given myself from my translation chores. Regrettably, my college too is under lock-down. Otherwise this is the time for our second semester examinations. Now all that schedule has been turned topsy-turvy. I am using the time to revise up the Sanskrit portions of my course. It is quite challenging what with Paninian grammar and Vedas and Kalidas and the six schools of Indian philosophy to study. We have very good teachers here at the Somaiya Vidyavihar University who are conducting online lectures in Sanskrit to keep us from drifting away too much from our Sanskrit studies.

Who knows.

Mumbai, where I stay, is the worst hit in India, but compared to what is happening in the rest of the world, we seem to be in a comfortable position, with cases around 5,000 with about 170 deaths so far. The worrying part is that the state of Maharashtra in which Mumbai falls in the worst hit, with Mumbai reporting the maximum number of cases and casualties.

And don’t forget tomorrow’s Cookery Friday, either.

So there is a stringent lock-out here, with all us cooped up in our flats not allowed even to step out of our doors. So far there is no difficulty in sourcing provisions, but lack of exercise is a problem, as I am a diabetic and have been advised at least two hours of walking every day.

A classic recipe.

I have exhausted all the serials and movies of Netflix and am scouring other sources of content. I binge-watched the Zoo tele-serial on Netflix which is eerily similar to what is happening now.

Rancid tradition.

Local time: 07:21

Oh all right, I haven’t even thought about it yet, but I’ll come up with something.

Friday 10 April, Good Friday (well, good …)

I usually do.

“Sánchez warns lockdown will be extended to mid-May”, snarls the headline. Like we never saw that one coming. So let’s think June. But the 24-hour deaths are more or less stable. Now there’s a strange sentence, deaths are stable.

That’s my problem.

The good news for Chris S is that the balderdash & tosh quota may be moving up today, what with this “Moan to Mervyn” plea I’ve just received below. Any similarities to previous postings are strictly unavoidable. What you see is what you get. And later on, just as soon as I’ve got it together, it’s Friday Cookery Day again.

Back to 3K on bugger knows what … let’s see, oh … a takeover bid.

It’s my mother-in-law. Her husband died of utter desperation, I reckon, for she's a dreadful, loud, dominant woman, my mother-in-law. She’s a fiend in human form. Such a temper. Unreasonable isn’t in it. She was born somewhere near hell, I think. She’s always around, either here or on the phone, do this, do that, ordering me about. I have these horrible dreams every single night of her chasing me on the back of an alligator, you know. It’s awful – I’m running as fast as I can, but they're always right on my heels. I look back and see the bloodshot yellow eyes, the sharp fangs drooling stringy saliva, the dry scaly skin, I hear the blood-curdling roars and the snap and crunch of the jaws opening and closing, and smell swampy, foetid breath blowing hot over my shoulder. And then there’s the alligator. I wake up in a cold sweat, I’m telling you. Please help me – I’m at the end of my tether.

Says here it’s going to be a humongous deal for all stakeholders.

Henpecked

Right.

….

Bored, bored, bored

I swung into action as follows:

God, I’m bored.

Dear Henpecked,

Still unable to do all that work on my desk or do much else except watch those piles grow and waste time surfing on my phone.

Now let’s not get carried away. What you have to do is control yourself, and try and concentrate on getting her on side. On your side. It’s all child psychology and hairdressers, you know. Yes, hairdressers. What you have to do is actually very simple. Just choose your moment and stare at her, if you can bring yourself to stare at her, for a second or two, as if puzzled, and then say: “Have you been to the hairdresser’s?” – She’ll say “No, why?” – and you say, “Oh I just thought you had, because your hair looks kind of very, er, kind of bouncy, big and alive, looking good, you know.” Or you can say: “Have you … well, I don’t like to make so bold as to … but … have you lost weight at all, er, lately?” – “No, why do you ask?” - I thought you looked a bit, well, lighter, that’s all.”

And today there was even nothing of interest on ProZ.

But the hair thing is the best bet of them all. Since she probably knows you hate her, she’s suspicious, but she imagines you of all people would hardly tell her this kind of thing. She won’t do it in front of you, but she’ll make a beeline for the nearest mirror to check herself out. Vanity, vanity, all is vanity, and certainly an older woman’s vanity doesn’t allow her to discard such comments, particularly if they’re from an unlikely source, so they cheer her up and she thinks as she preens herself in the mirror, “If this bozo, who doesn’t have any reason to say so, thinks I look good without having gone to the hairdresser’s, just think how I would look if I really did go.”

No nonsense from Mervyn; no nonsense from the nutters and grumps of this shire. I ended up battling my way through a two-part profile of ProZ’s Great Leader which just wasn’t quite sycophantic enough to be a parody.

And so the trap closes. Any suspicions she may have had collapse quicker than a Belgian government, and she high-tails it to the hairdresser, who does the rest for you. Because, whereas you or I just walk into a male hairdresser’s and say “short back and sides, please, Fred, and maybe a little something for the weekend”, and then tut-tut and tsk-tsk inanely about the referee’s eyesight during the match yesterday, perhaps glance briefly at our reflection in the mirror three or four times throughout the whole process, and are out again within a quarter of an hour, just crossing the threshold of the hairdresser’s is the start of a massive ego trip for all women across the entire gamut of attractiveness, the first phase in a process entailing hundreds of hopeful stares into a mirror over a proportionately short period of time.

And when I hit rock bottom I even checked out the ongoing Success Summit conferency thing.

Now is it just me or...

And across the whole range of ages, too. Let’s not forget we’re talking here about genuine specialists in old trouts. The older the customers are, and especially the more attractive they once were, the larger the quantities of psychological love-me lather that have to be expertly frothed up and laid on thicker than the tarmac on a Heathrow runway. Hairdressers are really psychologists to make women who don’t feel and look so good any more feel and look much better, and so there’s no such thing as going over the top. They make up for the physical impossibility of rectifying the inevitable incipient decrepitude and decay caused by the passage of time with an endless flurry of sycophantic squawking, clucking and cooing, and no woman at a hairdresser’s can get enough of that sort of thing. They lap it up like a cat at a huge bowl of cream. Especially if the hairdresser is another woman - after a certain age a woman finds herself in constant competition and comparison with every other woman on the planet. Yes, I mean all of them. No, no, because I can just see you shaking your head reading this, even daughters and mothers. Especially daughters and mothers, in fact. Doesn’t get any easier because it’s family, you know. Worse, in fact, because family know better than anyone else about all those embarrassing cracks and blemishes and hidden flaws and loose fixtures and creaky, leaky pipes under the fading paintwork and fissured plaster. Thus the idea of another female sucking up to them is even more attractive, and better still if it’s a large gaggle of them. Have you ever listened in at a women’s hairdresser’s?

... do other people also find it absolutely mind-numbing watching webcam footage of people with tinny voices spending half their time fixing technical glitches and then taking 30 minutes to run through a set of bullet points that I had already skimmed and absorbed in 30 seconds?

“Hello, it’s just WONDERFUL to see you again, Marjorie. WHAT a beautiful dress/bag/skirt/coat”, they say as the hapless prey creeps in for her personal ego massage. “That Catherine Zeta-Jones had one just like yours in a film I saw last night. So where have you been HIDING, Marjorie my love?

As translators, wouldn’t we be better served by the same information (which could well be very insightful) being presented in written form rather than slo-mo video?

Only a FORTNIGHT since the last session?

Nonsense

Really?

These are hurtful words, Chris.

– that’s funny, seems like more, we’ve all MISSED you, haven’t we girls?

Sad to realise one is seen as naught but a purveyor of poppycock by appointment.

I was just saying to Doris yesterday what a LAUGH we always have with Marjorie, wasn’t I Doris?

There's bugger all going on around here either, if it's any consolation.

Big-hearted Marjorie, I call her, don’t I Doris, yes I do. The usual, is it, dear, a blue rinse?

I was reading a bit of Shakey by the window earlier, but couldn't concentrate because there's a lot of trumpet-parping and drum-banging going on from the balconies as people try to do Easter as best they can without the usual pointy-hat processions winding solemnly through the streets.

Of COURSE. Just sit down over there, my darling, make yourself comfortable, yes, take that BIG COMFY one over there, oh yes, it RECLINES too, I had you SPECIALLY in mind when I bought it - Marjorie would LOVE that chair, I said, didn’t I Doris, yes I did. Doris will take your coat, yes of COURSE, have a nice little read at the Daily Mail until one of the girls can get back to you. OOOH, don’t you smell GOOD!

Be more creative

– now don’t tell me, let me guess … it’s that NEW one by Yves Saint Laurent, isn’t it, God rest his soul?

God, I’m bored. Still unable to do all that work on my desk or do much else except watch those piles grow and waste time surfing on my phone.

I could have SWORN it was. Just LOOK at Marjorie’s gloss lipstick, girls. It’s just so HER, isn’t it?

I procrastinated manfully by trudging down to my woodland and felling a few trees.

God knows what you need US for to give you beauty treatment, Marjorie, it’s US that need YOU, naaaaaaaaarrrrrrrr!!!!!!”

Lovely day for it.

Female hairdressers, Henpecked, know that what their customers want is a no-nonsense, industrial-sized shot of me-me-me-look-at-me medicine in the arm, or in the hair, rather. This is a place where the adulation is on tap, flowing like sick at closing time outside the Bricklayer’s Arms after the Boddington’s Yard of Ale contest on a Friday night. Adulation at a price, mind. Understand that’s why it costs so much, because what they’re paying for is two hours of complete devotion to their appearance by a bevy of competing females but, although you’ll hear a mother-in-law complaining about many, many things in this life, shrilly denouncing this, that and the other morning, noon and night, over and over and over again as you stare into the middle distance, mentally on your knees with head bowed, a beaten man begging your God to show you He exists, to manifest Himself with a miracle to take away your pain, some fortuitous instance of force majeure you can’t possibly be blamed, penalised or incarcerated for - anything, for Christ’s sake, anything at all, a runaway horse, a bolt of lightning frazzling both the umbrella and the woman holding it to protect that hair against the rain, a solitary rogue tile falling on her from a dodgy roof, a rusty bolt suddenly snapping in two on the safety barrier at the edge of a cliff-path high above the sea pounding the rocks down below, a tragic dénouement to a shoot-out with Special Branch following an armed robbery with hostages gone terribly wrong at the NatWest, or whatever, you will never ever hear the slightest trace of a complaint about the price of a hair-do.

Meanwhile, a project sits in my folder, watching me balefully.

So man up, Henpecked, invite her round for lunch, lay your plans, and do what you have to do. …

To be bored or not to be

@Brian

Oddly enough the beginning of my April has been very busy, much of it with work from a US home entertainment manufacturer. Some of us are lucky to have end clients that continue to operate during the crisis. But from Europe it's pretty dead. Fortunately I haven't found the time to be bored recently. But who knows where it's all going?

Sad indeed. I assume this is the news piece:

Chris, since you complain about absent grumps, allow me to encourage you by complaining about the missing comma after 'great leader', as what follows is a non-restrictive clause. I hope it isn't becoming a more widespread Welsh pastime to sabotage the English language. 😁

https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-52091928

Dan, once the quarantines and other restrictions are gone, you shall be more than welcome to practice and demonstrate your excellent and valuable tree-felling skills here on my ex-GDR smallholding. I have four dead medium-to-large pines that need to be removed before they fall on their own. To judge by their size, they may well have been planted before the war (don't mention it here). Well, I'll probably end up having to pay some local company to do it, as the pines are way too big for a normal chainsaw and no matter where they fall, they'll damage something. At least I got rid of some prickly shrubs, whatever the damn things are called – in any case a thorny issue.

Sergei and Alexandra, Alexandra and Sergei.

The dark world of my billionaire lifestyle

A fairy tale that turned into a hairy tale.

An article on the BBC App, a great read, poor Sergai is down to his last £70 million, nearly had me in tears.

And finally …

Overcoming overcommaing

Cookery Day. I know you’re going to laugh, and I’m expecting a horrendous backlash from the Spanish translator community too, but today I’m going to explain how to make Spanish tortilla. Don’t knock it. They take their tortilla seriously here. They even have competitions. There are a couple of places in Bilbao and, I suspect, in every town and city, famed for their tortilla. One of them was Bar Baviera, a Bilbao classic not 5 minutes from this very abode, which sadly closed on New Year’s Eve for good, after over 25 years of tortilla with or without hot red pepper “alegrías” on the side of the plate, served up by Juan in the mornings or Jon in the evenings (and vice-versa, week about).

Well, Tom, oops, Thomas, much as I admire and appreciate such a noble foray into the fine Britannic tradition of pointless grammatical nit-picking, we may have to agree to disagree here.

Ingredients:

Although I was on my phone, which would automatically half-excuse an abominable error of this kind, I am relieved on further review to see that said clause is in fact restrictive, so the absence of a comma is not just correct but crucial.

One smallish potato per person

Of course, our country cousins across the water would claim that I must therefore use that not which, but I would counter that that that is optional in proper English and that that that rule is a colonial aberration.

One smallish onion per person

Much, of course, is personal. I for one cannot abide the Oxford comma, which to my eyes is as American as it gets, whatever its origins; yet the number one nit-picker of this parish swings the other way.

One and a half eggs per person

(Here’s a thought: Is a lousy nit-picker good or bad at their job?)

Olive oil

In all seriousness, though, Thomas, I do greatly admire your English. One suspects that if we were to meet, one might not have to shout slowly at you at all.

Chorizo

Over- or undercommaing observations

Small bottle of beer (oh yes)

Hmm, I was under the distinct impression that the Proz bunker had only one Great Leader, so a clause to identify which one would seem pointless, which means, incidentally, that that sentence should not be commaless but comma inclusive.

Yes, I know, I’m streets ahead of you here. What if there are only three of you?

And now we’re nitpicking, since you were quite clearly suffering from a bout of grumpiness withdrawal symptoms (which I’m graciously trying to relieve), we could debate whether nitpicking should be spelt nit-picking.

How many eggs?

We could also, for now, put a full stop to this pointless debate, which would thus no longer be pointless – or should I say fullstopless – as from the point at which said full stop was pointed out.

You know what, live dangerously and stick in five eggs, what the hell. And I only put in chorizo to tease the Spanish. So ditch the chorizo. I phoned Jamie Oliver, and he said it’s OK wivout.

That that which which you referred to was not a that, but a which (which many Telegraph journalists would presumably spell ‘witch’ – just today they wrote about the coronavirus situation: ‘if people do not head the warnings’, which sounds like an interesting spectacle to behold, people heading warnings around in a park or elsewhere, which would presumably get them arrested for flouting social-distancing rules – but I’m digressing) would obviously confuse an American, but on our shores it’s quite obvious that that that that you discussed is optional and may be freely substituted by a which which may not be preceded by a comma, which would completely change the meaning.

Chop up the onion. Not too fine and not too chunky, inbetween. Stick it on low heat in a finger or two of olive oil in a frying pan (the spuds have to fit in afterwards, so you need some floating room there). Meanwhile, you’ve already peeled the spuds. Sometimes, if I haven’t got the time, I simply can’t fight off the temptation to just cut the potatoes lengthways, cut them crossways and slice through the middle to produce cubes. But the Basques are snooping around all the time, so you have to take your little knife and cut uneven bits at random off the potatoes schloop-schloop-schloop as you hold them in one hand. They say it improves the flavour. Yeah, right.

It’s quite an interesting observation that the Oxford comma can be called American, since Oxford, i.e. the original one, not the many pirate copies in the US and elsewhere, does appear to be quite English, but nevertheless Americans do indeed seem to be enamoured with this particular Oxford feature, whereas the British aren’t. I’m not a fan of it either. I wonder if at any point in time a homecommaing campaign has been attempted for the purpose of reintroducing the Oxford comma to Oxford and its surroundings, but the government would probably find a way to tax or quarantine such an American reimport.

By now the onions will have softened and will be all shiny. Dump in the potato and turn up the heat slightly. Stir it all round a bit occasionally with a wooden spatula, make sure all the bits get done evenly. The eggs, well, the eggs are self-explanatory. Beat them in a large bowl and add one pinch of salt per person. Just as the potato is beginning to lightly brown, switch off and use a slotted spoon to drain and put all the bits into the egg mix.

You asked, ‘Here’s a thought: Is a lousy nit-picker good or bad at their job?’ It’s a tricky question indeed. I guess it depends on what the nitpicker’s job is and what said nitpicker’s job performance is, since being a nitpicker (with or without a hyphen) doesn’t imply that the nitpicker’s job is to nitpick stuff that may or may not need to be nitpicked.

Now the dangerous bit. You can use the same frying pan if you like, or a smaller one, depends on the numbers. Clean it or use another one, non-stick, but put only a tablespoon or so of oil back in. Highish heat, swirling the oil all around so that it puts a bit of a film on most of the pan. Throw in the eggy mixture, and start lifting the edges a little and letting liquid run down to the sides to make sure it’s all being cooked. Note: don’t wait until all the eggy liquid has gone. A good tortilla should have a certain amount of liquid egginess to it, otherwise you might as well buy the crappy dry ones wrapped in plastic at the supermarket. Move the pan around to make sure the tortilla is fully mobile.

Your closing remark was: ‘In all seriousness, though, Thomas, I do greatly admire your English. One suspects that if we were to meet, one might not have to shout slowly at you at all.’

Take a saucepan lid. Now open that bottle of beer ahead of the moment of truth. Down it in one, wipe your mouth and say Aaaaaah!

Thank you. That’s good to hear. Yours isn’t too bad either, if I may say so, notwithstanding any pointless comma issues. Shouting slowly might not be quite necessary. Maybe just shouting or talking slowly would be sufficient. Shouting would just frighten my cat, by the way. I can talk about my multilingual feline vocabulary another time. For now, let me just give a single example of how I rationalised saying ‘meow out’ to her when she’s about to go out, by trimming it to just ‘me-out’. My daughter insists that it’s not because she understands it she then goes out, but because she was about to go out anyway.

Call in the kids/wife/husband/girlfriend/boyfriend. This is a mere pretext for witnesses, naturally. Say nonchalantly: “Could you open the wine, dear, because I’m nearly finished?” or “Set the table, will you, this is ready”. Like you didn't care, see. Like you do this all the time.

Should you wish to assist Dan’s potential Teutonic tree-felling endeavours, you’ll be very welcome. If you warn me in advance, I can be sure to procure a megaphone.

Go to the sink (just in case you fess up …). Place the lid over the pan and deftly turn the whole thing over on to the lid. Slide it off the lid into the pan again, return it to the hob for two seconds to “wipe its arse”, as they say in the trade (well, I do), switch off and slide on to a plate, hopefully amidst open-mouthed admiration, but reserve a quiet tight-lipped dignity if nobody says squat. Serve with side salad, those red peppers or anything at all, really.

Balasubramaniam L.

Tackling tedium

India

Mervyn

Local time: 10:51

I for one greatly appreciate your efforts to liven up the existence of Chris S, who appears to have succumbed to a modish début-de-siècle ennui.

English to Hindi

For my part, I am open-mouthed with admiration. Given that we now have access to every book ever written, every song ever sung, every film ever made, the entire Internet, the immense depth of our own thoughts, the marvels of cookery, art and sport within our own home, the seductive draw of our work AND the endless delights of this forum, to be able to experience boredom in 2020 is an impressive achievement.

Update from Mumbai

Who was it again who said When a man is tired of life, he's tired of life?

Apr 10

Personally, I have a preference for Blaise Pascal's: Tout le malheur des hommes vient d'une seule chose, qui est de ne savoir pas demeurer en repos, dans une chambre.

Today is the 17th day of a 21-day lock-out called by our PM Narendra Modi. Looking back, time seems to have flown - so much has happened that I hardly noticed the turning of the leaves of the calendar.

Bric-à-brac Apr 10

My daughter is in the 12th standard, unfortunately for her, the last of her exams got postponed due to the lockout. Many of the competitive exams she will be appearing in May-June (like the IIT entrance exam) have also been postponed - indefinitely. Although she is quite thrilled at the extended "vacation", we are really concerned about her future, as there is a good chance that she might lose a whole academic year.

Andrew, all the translations on the Internet that I can see are along the lines of:

She sleeps most of the time, and binge-watches videos. We don't grudge her this "lucky" break, as for the last two years she has really slogged with her studies, what with full-time school followed by 4-5 hours of tuition every day. She would leave home at 7 am and come back only at night at 9 or 10 pm. Then there word be home work and assignments to complete, which means she would stay up till 1 am in the night and sometimes even later. We were really concerned about her health.

“All of man's misfortune comes from one thing, which is not knowing how to \*sit\* quietly in a room”

I soon decided that the "vacation" should be put to good use for her. So I have enrolled her into a Sanskrit learning course of Sanskrit Bharati and am teaching her basic Sanskrit for an hour every day. It is amazing how fast kids pick up a new language, although Sanskrit is not exactly "new" to Indians, as all modern Indian languages are derived from Sanskrit.

Sadly, sitting is not an option for me in my current condition.

I too enrolled myself for a full time MA in Sanskrit last August, so I too am into full-time Sanskrit studies during the two years of sabbatical I have given myself from my translation chores. Regrettably, my college too is under lock-down. Otherwise this is the time for our second semester examinations.

Now all that schedule has been turned topsy-turvy. I am using the time to revise up the Sanskrit portions of my course. It is quite challenging what with Paninian grammar and Vedas and Kalidas and the six schools of Indian philosophy to study.

We have very good teachers here at the Somaiya Vidyavihar University who are conducting online lectures in Sanskrit to keep us from drifting away too much from our Sanskrit studies.

Interestingly, though, Google Translate gets it right (😱):

Mumbai, where I stay, is the worst hit in India, but compared to what is happening in the rest of the world, we seem to be in a comfortable position, with cases around 5,000 with about 170 deaths so far.

The worrying part is that the state of Maharashtra in which Mumbai falls in the worst hit, with Mumbai reporting the maximum number of cases and casualties.

“All the misfortune of men comes from one thing, which is not knowing how to stay at rest, in a room”

So there is a stringent lock-out here, with all us cooped up in our flats not allowed even to step out of our doors.

So far there is no difficulty in sourcing provisions, but lack of exercise is a problem, as I am a diabetic and have been advised at least two hours of walking every day.

Couple of other things:

I have exhausted all the serials and movies of Netflix and am scouring other sources of content.

I binge-watched the Zoo tele-serial on Netflix which is eerily similar to what is happening now.

Mervyn, why are you calling an omelette a tortilla?

Local time: 07:21

I’m tempted to retaliate by posting a recipe for toad in the hole and calling it spotted dick.

Friday 10 April, Good Friday (well, good …)

Thomas might enjoy yesterday’s BBC headline:

“Italy PM: EU needs to help virus hit countries”.

Sounds counterproductive.

“Sánchez warns lockdown will be extended to mid-May”, snarls the headline.

Like we never saw that one coming.

So let’s think June.

But the 24-hour deaths are more or less stable.

Now there’s a strange sentence, deaths are stable.

And then one for both Thomas and Bala (or is it L?):

Which punctuation can I take most heart from when my son blurted out the other day:

“You’re a shit dad” or “You’re a shit, Dad”?

The good news for Chris S is that the balderdash & tosh quota may be moving up today, what with this “Moan to Mervyn” plea I’ve just received below.

Any similarities to previous postings are strictly unavoidable.

What you see is what you get.

And later on, just as soon as I’ve got it together, it’s Friday Cookery Day again.

Other postures are available

It’s my mother-in-law.

Her husband died of utter desperation, I reckon, for she's a dreadful, loud, dominant woman, my mother-in-law.

She’s a fiend in human form.

Such a temper.

Unreasonable isn’t in it. She was born somewhere near hell, I think.

She’s always around, either here or on the phone, do this, do that, ordering me about.

I have these horrible dreams every single night of her chasing me on the back of an alligator, you know.

It’s awful – I’m running as fast as I can, but they're always right on my heels.

I look back and see the bloodshot yellow eyes, the sharp fangs drooling stringy saliva, the dry scaly skin, I hear the blood-curdling roars and the snap and crunch of the jaws opening and closing, and smell swampy, foetid breath blowing hot over my shoulder.

And then there’s the alligator.

I wake up in a cold sweat, I’m telling you. Please help me – I’m at the end of my tether.

I had no idea. Hope you are ok.

Henpecked

Anyway, I'm sure it applies to standing or lying down too.

Even plain old "being" would do.

….

Pascal was a philosopher and mathematician rather than a Pilates teacher.

I swung into action as follows:

Well, with all the war parallels being mentioned, what with Her Majesty (and Matt) referring to Vera Lynn and the media referring to Boris as a wartime PM (at least as long as he was able to stand up), the BBC may have become stuck in the in the wartime mindset and subconsciously concluded that Italy may be planning to attack their neighbours with a virus.

Dear Henpecked,

They may also just have been infected by the contemporary American fashion of leaving out hyphens in compound adjectives, of course.

Now let’s not get carried away.

What you have to do is control yourself, and try and concentrate on getting her on side.

On your side.

It’s all child psychology and hairdressers, you know.

Yes, hairdressers.

What you have to do is actually very simple.

Just choose your moment and stare at her, if you can bring yourself to stare at her, for a second or two, as if puzzled, and then say:

“Have you been to the hairdresser’s?”

– She’ll say “No, why?”

– and you say, “Oh I just thought you had, because your hair looks kind of very, er, kind of bouncy, big and alive, looking good, you know.” Or you can say:

“Have you … well, I don’t like to make so bold as to … but … have you lost weight at all, er, lately?”

– “No, why do you ask?”

- I thought you looked a bit, well, lighter, that’s all.”

Or perhaps their editor has been infected by the virus.

But the hair thing is the best bet of them all.

Since she probably knows you hate her, she’s suspicious, but she imagines you of all people would hardly tell her this kind of thing.

She won’t do it in front of you, but she’ll make a beeline for the nearest mirror to check herself out.

Vanity, vanity, all is vanity, and certainly an older woman’s vanity doesn’t allow her to discard such comments, particularly if they’re from an unlikely source, so they cheer her up and she thinks as she preens herself in the mirror,

“If this bozo, who doesn’t have any reason to say so, thinks I look good without having gone to the hairdresser’s, just think how I would look if I really did go.”

Regardless of the punctuation, your son may need some positive encouragement, unless he had his mouth full of sweets and really intended to say, ‘you’re a cheat, dad’

(perhaps he believed you had cheated in a game).

Some people find it difficult to distinguish between the ‘ch’ sound and the ‘sh’ sounds, particularly here in Germany, where I was asked for a shipkarte (ship card) one of the first times I went to see a doctor after moving to Germany.

I wondered why they thought I had a ship or at least a card related to a ship and what that had to do with the doctor, so I asked them what a shipkarte was.

What they meant was ‘chip card’, the purpose of which is to streamline the payment process, as healthcare isn’t free here.

And so the trap closes.

Any suspicions she may have had collapse quicker than a Belgian government, and she high-tails it to the hairdresser, who does the rest for you.

Because, whereas you or I just walk into a male hairdresser’s and say “short back and sides, please, Fred, and maybe a little something for the weekend”, and then tut-tut and tsk-tsk inanely about the referee’s eyesight during the match yesterday, perhaps glance briefly at our reflection in the mirror three or four times throughout the whole process, and are out again within a quarter of an hour, just crossing the threshold of the hairdresser’s is the start of a massive ego trip for all women across the entire gamut of attractiveness, the first phase in a process entailing hundreds of hopeful stares into a mirror over a proportionately short period of time.

Nobody speaks English here and some of them don’t even speak German, but an undecipherable Saxon dialect, which reminds me of Luxemburgish, which is equally undecipherable.

And across the whole range of ages, too.

Let’s not forget we’re talking here about genuine specialists in old trouts.

The older the customers are, and especially the more attractive they once were, the larger the quantities of psychological love-me lather that have to be expertly frothed up and laid on thicker than the tarmac on a Heathrow runway.

Hairdressers are really psychologists to make women who don’t feel and look so good any more feel and look much better, and so there’s no such thing as going over the top.

They make up for the physical impossibility of rectifying the inevitable incipient decrepitude and decay caused by the passage of time with an endless flurry of sycophantic squawking, clucking and cooing, and no woman at a hairdresser’s can get enough of that sort of thing.

They lap it up like a cat at a huge bowl of cream.

Especially if the hairdresser is another woman - after a certain age a woman finds herself in constant competition and comparison with every other woman on the planet.

Yes, I mean all of them.

No, no, because I can just see you shaking your head reading this, even daughters and mothers.

Especially daughters and mothers, in fact.

Doesn’t get any easier because it’s family, you know.

Worse, in fact, because family know better than anyone else about all those embarrassing cracks and blemishes and hidden flaws and loose fixtures and creaky, leaky pipes under the fading paintwork and fissured plaster.

Thus the idea of another female sucking up to them is even more attractive, and better still if it’s a large gaggle of them.

Have you ever listened in at a women’s hairdresser’s?

Quarantine tortilla

“Hello, it’s just WONDERFUL to see you again, Marjorie.

WHAT a beautiful dress/bag/skirt/coat”, they say as the hapless prey creeps in for her personal ego massage.

“That Catherine Zeta-Jones had one just like yours in a film I saw last night.

So where have you been HIDING, Marjorie my love?

Apr 11

Only a FORTNIGHT since the last session?

Cookery Day.

I know you’re going to laugh, and I’m expecting a horrendous backlash from the Spanish translator community too, but today I’m going to explain how to make Spanish tortilla.

Really?

You won't believe it, but suddenly when I read this recipe, I could not help but prepare a tortilla on the spot!

– that’s funny, seems like more, we’ve all MISSED you, haven’t we girls?

Of course, getting chorizo is not easy when you are in quarantine and even less outside Spain.

So I went without chorizo.

Like every good German I have always sufficient potatoes at home, and I had got some eggs and onions, too.

So there was everything I needed.

The only difference compared to the recipe, I salted the potatoes after having fried them.

As I was so statisfied with the result, I'll prepare another tortilla probably next week.:-)

I was just saying to Doris yesterday what a LAUGH we always have with Marjorie, wasn’t I Doris?

No beer, since I had been shopping last time only two days ago and there are disheartening lines in front of the supermarkets.

Big-hearted Marjorie, I call her, don’t I Doris, yes I do.

The usual, is it, dear, a blue rinse?

Happy Easter to everyone that is in quarantine or not, stay healthy and keep distance anyway

Of COURSE. Just sit down over there, my darling, make yourself comfortable, yes, take that BIG COMFY one over there, oh yes, it RECLINES too, I had you SPECIALLY in mind when I bought it - Marjorie would LOVE that chair, I said, didn’t I Doris, yes I did.

Doris will take your coat, yes of COURSE, have a nice little read at the Daily Mail until one of the girls can get back to you.

OOOH, don’t you smell GOOD!

Of course, getting chorizo is not easy when you are in quarantine and even less outside Spain.

– now don’t tell me, let me guess … it’s that NEW one by Yves Saint Laurent, isn’t it, God rest his soul?

Better keep an eye on the Lidl catalogue, then, and grab some when it's Spanish week.

I could have SWORN it was. Just LOOK at Marjorie’s gloss lipstick, girls. It’s just so HER, isn’t it?

@Christel - good job you couldn't get any chorizo

God knows what you need US for to give you beauty treatment, Marjorie, it’s US that need YOU, naaaaaaaaarrrrrrrr!!!!!!”

Good for you!

Female hairdressers, Henpecked, know that what their customers want is a no-nonsense, industrial-sized shot of me-me-me-look-at-me medicine in the arm, or in the hair, rather.

This is a place where the adulation is on tap, flowing like sick at closing time outside the Bricklayer’s Arms after the Boddington’s Yard of Ale contest on a Friday night.

Adulation at a price, mind.

Understand that’s why it costs so much, because what they’re paying for is two hours of complete devotion to their appearance by a bevy of competing females but, although you’ll hear a mother-in-law complaining about many, many things in this life, shrilly denouncing this, that and the other morning, noon and night, over and over and over again as you stare into the middle distance, mentally on your knees with head bowed, a beaten man begging your God to show you He exists, to manifest Himself with a miracle to take away your pain, some fortuitous instance of force majeure you can’t possibly be blamed, penalised or incarcerated for - anything, for Christ’s sake, anything at all, a runaway horse, a bolt of lightning frazzling both the umbrella and the woman holding it to protect that hair against the rain, a solitary rogue tile falling on her from a dodgy roof, a rusty bolt suddenly snapping in two on the safety barrier at the edge of a cliff-path high above the sea pounding the rocks down below, a tragic dénouement to a shoot-out with Special Branch following an armed robbery with hostages gone terribly wrong at the NatWest, or whatever, you will never ever hear the slightest trace of a complaint about the price of a hair-do.

But ...

So man up, Henpecked, invite her round for lunch, lay your plans, and do what you have to do. …

I realise I didn't explain myself very well or, looking back at what I wrote, I only explained myself cryptically.

The chorizo is only a joke.

British chef Jamie Oliver caused considerable controversy last year or the year before when he suggested chorizo could also be used in Spanish paella.

Having said that, you'll see all kinds of tortilla all over Spain, but the classic "tortilla española" or "tortilla de patata" has just egg and potato and onion.

The onion is optional for many people, and so you might be asked in a bar which you prefer if they have both on offer at the counter.

Although personally it wouldn't occur to me make one without onion.

Onion gives it a certain amount of oomph.

@Brian

page-16

Sad indeed. I assume this is the news piece:

Local time: 07:12

https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-52091928

Try the "Mona de Pascua"

Sergei and Alexandra, Alexandra and Sergei.

As far as I know, the traditional "tortilla" (in Spain) or "tortilha" (in Portugal) hasn't got "chorizo" or "choriza" in it.

You can add it to the recipe as an option, if you like its flavour, or you want to commit an atrocity to this emblematic dish In Easter, try to prepare the "Mona de Pascua" (known as "Folar da Páscoa" in Portugal).

It is very easy to make.

You only need flour, sugar, eggs and a raising agent.

The thing that sets this dessert apart is the hardboiled eggs that are baked into the centre of this "roscón" for decoration.

A Happy and Healthy Easter to everyone

A fairy tale that turned into a hairy tale.

Local time: 08:12

And finally …

Sunday 12 April

Cookery Day.

I know you’re going to laugh, and I’m expecting a horrendous backlash from the Spanish translator community too, but today I’m going to explain how to make Spanish tortilla.

Don’t knock it.

They take their tortilla seriously here.

They even have competitions.

There are a couple of places in Bilbao and, I suspect, in every town and city, famed for their tortilla.

One of them was Bar Baviera, a Bilbao classic not 5 minutes from this very abode, which sadly closed on New Year’s Eve for good, after over 25 years of tortilla with or without hot red pepper “alegrías” on the side of the plate, served up by Juan in the mornings or Jon in the evenings (and vice-versa, week about).

Apr 12

Ingredients:

Urbi et Orbi on TV.

Otherwise nothing going on around here.

Headline "Distribution of public transport masks source of dispute between central government and Basque government".

One smallish potato per person

Politicians are up in arms now about anything.

Pedro Sánchez says he's going to do this, others say he shouldn't do it.

Pedro Sánchez says he isn't going to do this, others say he should.

Pedro Sánchez farts loudly, others say he should show more respect for the dead by farting silently.

Pedro Sánchez farts silently, others say he should be more up front by farting loudly and therefore transparently.

One smallish onion per person

But I have a feeling politicians are yapping so much to show the people that they're still working to earn the salary that nobody will be taking from them no matter what, even though we have a fair idea they're sitting otiose in a gaff much bigger than ours and farting loudly, silently, or not at all.

All in the same boat, they like to say.

Right.

Oops, just farted.

Very loudly.

One and a half eggs per person

Something in the wind

Olive oil

It’s always best to fart transparently

Chorizo

Fawn with the wind

Small bottle of beer (oh yes)

Not sure transparency is the best way to go on every occasion.

Wasn't it Confucius who said,

"When the regal master passes by, the faithful servant kneels reverently and silently farts"?

Yes, I know, I’m streets ahead of you here.

What if there are only three of you?

Welldone Boris!!!

How many eggs?

The prime minister is doing well, I am glad despite being opposed to tory politics in general.

I wonder if the PMs personal health victory will be a symbol of our general victory over Covid.

Denmark plans to open up shop next week, Austria and Norway say they will begin loosening of the lockdown.

Is this the light at the end of the tunnel?

You know what, live dangerously and stick in five eggs, what the hell. And I only put in chorizo to tease the Spanish.

So ditch the chorizo. I phoned Jamie Oliver, and he said it’s OK wivout.

Is it over?

Chop up the onion. Not too fine and not too chunky, inbetween.

Stick it on low heat in a finger or two of olive oil in a frying pan (the spuds have to fit in afterwards, so you need some floating room there). Meanwhile, you’ve already peeled the spuds.

Sometimes, if I haven’t got the time, I simply can’t fight off the temptation to just cut the potatoes lengthways, cut them crossways and slice through the middle to produce cubes.

But the Basques are snooping around all the time, so you have to take your little knife and cut uneven bits at random off the potatoes schloop-schloop-schloop as you hold them in one hand.

They say it improves the flavour. Yeah, right.

Can I go back to my shit life now?

By now the onions will have softened and will be all shiny.

Dump in the potato and turn up the heat slightly.

Stir it all round a bit occasionally with a wooden spatula, make sure all the bits get done evenly.

The eggs, well, the eggs are self-explanatory.

Beat them in a large bowl and add one pinch of salt per person.

Just as the potato is beginning to lightly brown, switch off and use a slotted spoon to drain and put all the bits into the egg mix.

I hope you’re joking, Brian, because you don’t have a shit life and neither does Boris.

Other people have shit lives.

Some of them have really, really shit lives.

Take Dolly, for instance.

Dolly’s ten years old going on eighteen.

She has an engaging waifish smile, albeit with a few black teeth here and there, and a few missing because she gets knocked around a lot.

She doesn’t smell too good today because she hasn’t had a shower, and she can only grab a shower if it happens to rain and...

See more

Now the dangerous bit.

You can use the same frying pan if you like, or a smaller one, depends on the numbers.

Clean it or use another one, non-stick, but put only a tablespoon or so of oil back in.

Highish heat, swirling the oil all around so that it puts a bit of a film on most of the pan.

Throw in the eggy mixture, and start lifting the edges a little and letting liquid run down to the sides to make sure it’s all being cooked.

Note: don’t wait until all the eggy liquid has gone.

A good tortilla should have a certain amount of liquid egginess to it, otherwise you might as well buy the crappy dry ones wrapped in plastic at the supermarket.

Move the pan around to make sure the tortilla is fully mobile.

Ok

Take a saucepan lid.

Now open that bottle of beer ahead of the moment of truth.

Down it in one, wipe your mouth and say Aaaaaah!

Yes

Call in the kids/wife/husband/girlfriend/boyfriend.

This is a mere pretext for witnesses, naturally.

Say nonchalantly:

“Could you open the wine, dear, because I’m nearly finished?”

or “Set the table, will you, this is ready”.

Like you didn't care, see.

Like you do this all the time.

Monday 13 April

Go to the sink (just in case you fess up …).

Place the lid over the pan and deftly turn the whole thing over on to the lid.

Slide it off the lid into the pan again, return it to the hob for two seconds to “wipe its arse”, as they say in the trade (well, I do), switch off and slide on to a plate, hopefully amidst open-mouthed admiration, but reserve a quiet tight-lipped dignity if nobody says squat.

Serve with side salad, those red peppers or anything at all, really.

Apr 13

Tackling tedium

It’s been a calendar month since I nipped back to the gym, never to return because it closed without warning the next day, to pick up my gear just in case.

Mervyn

“230,000 Basque industry and construction workers go back to jobs gradually”, the headline announces.

This is because Sánchez had placed a 6-day ban on non-essential employment until today, presumably as a measure to give the country a better chance of cutting contagion with a short, sharp shock.

Endlessly criticised, natch.

These days they even carp at the tie you wear (some people seen with black ties in parliament), so who shall ´scape whipping for the more important things?

I for one greatly appreciate your efforts to liven up the existence of Chris S, who appears to have succumbed to a modish début-de-siècle ennui.

And the rentrée will be gradual because Easter Monday’s a public holiday here and in seven other regions.

619 deaths in Spain yesterday, and the local rag now puts the local coffin count on the front page too, 39.

For my part, I am open-mouthed with admiration.

Given that we now have access to every book ever written, every song ever sung, every film ever made, the entire Internet, the immense depth of our own thoughts, the marvels of cookery, art and sport within our own home, the seductive draw of our work AND the endless delights of this forum, to be able to experience boredom in 2020 is an impressive achievement.

Oh, and I can feel a “Moan to Mervyn” coming on, but maybe later.

Got to get the Secret Ingredient (chicken cube this time) into the chickpeas before the Basques start swarming around the kitchen asking questions you’ve got no answer for.

Who was it again who said When a man is tired of life, he's tired of life?

Tuesday 14 April

Personally, I have a preference for Blaise Pascal's:

Apr 14

Bric-à-brac Apr 10

517 deaths in Spain yesterday, and 27 in the Basque Country, so the count is finally falling again.

Many more people going back to work today after the Monday holiday, and they’re giving out masks at train, metro and bus stations.

Andrew, all the translations on the Internet that I can see are along the lines of:

“Masks handed out today to go to work can only be used for four hours”, warns the headline.

The idea is you get one on the outward journey, and one on the way home.

After you’ve bought your ticket or swiped your card, naturally, because there are a lot of smart Alecs about.

“All of man's misfortune comes from one thing, which is not knowing how to \*sit\* quietly in a room”

Below there’s a photo of the Basque President visiting a Covid-19 screen protector production plant, all masked-and-gloved up.

You can tell he’s the main man because only he’s wearing one of the screens.

Like him, three others are wearing blue gloves.

Maybe it’s a rank thing, because another of his deputies has purple gloves.

There’s another man in the picture with his hands behind his back.

Why’s that?

Sadly, sitting is not an option for me in my current condition.

Could be because he arrived late and they’d run out of gloves, so he isn’t wearing any, and that's bad PR.

Could be he’s lower in the pecking order, and had to settle for the lurid pink gloves with teddy-bear motifs.

Could be he has no hands.

Interestingly, though, Google Translate gets it right (😱):

Today’s also the 89th anniversary of the declaration of Spain’s Second Republic, so we can expect a lot of the old Republican tricolour flags out on the balconies.

There was a time when the present Queen would have been flying one of those herself when she was anchor woman at Spanish TV all those years ago, or so they say, but those republican sympathies mellow and fade to naught after one has been palaced up a tad.

“All the misfortune of men comes from one thing, which is not knowing how to stay at rest, in a room”

Talking of flags, and masks, we’re now seeing that a mask is not just a mask.

There are masks and there are masks.

Some politicians have got hold of masks with a little Spanish flag on them, and so it’s only a matter of time before we see little Basque flags, little Catalan flags, little Galician flags etc. on other masks.

One country, but worra lorra flags.

During the recent Catalan cafuffle, now largely shelved but not forgotten due to you-know-what, there was a lot of talk about flags.

I noticed during one “voice of reason” demonstration that someone was holding a placard saying “A flag is a piece of cloth”.

Well.

Easy to say.

Where I come from, and in many other places where many other people come from, a flag is very much a piece of wroth.

Couple of other things:

Meanwhile, “Moan to Mervyn” has received a desperate plea, but I’m still desperately dealing with it and it could well be a desperate Matter of Life and Death, so watch this space.

Mervyn, why are you calling an omelette a tortilla?

Moan to Mervyn

I’m tempted to retaliate by posting a recipe for toad in the hole and calling it spotted dick.

I can’t go on.

My only solace when I wake up in the morning is the bottle of gin on the bedside table.

Well, actually, it’s not my only solace.

There’s also the solace of the cold spliff in the ashtray I light straight after a few shots of the gin.

And a still photo of Britney Spears with legs spread wide as she dances.

My only three solaces.

And I’ve been in trouble with the law, too.

Look what they wrote about me in the paper only yesterday:

Thomas might enjoy yesterday’s BBC headline:

“Italy PM: EU needs to help virus hit countries”.

Sounds counterproductive.

\*\*\*\*\*

And then one for both Thomas and Bala (or is it L?):

Which punctuation can I take most heart from when my son blurted out the other day:

“You’re a shit dad” or “You’re a shit, Dad”?

MILLTOWN BUGLE

Other postures are available

Courts Section – Martin Friar reports

I had no idea.

Hope you are ok.

Curious scenes and a certain amount of confusion at the District Court yesterday as it heard a case of disorderly conduct leading to a breach of the peace in the city by an unemployed person who gave his address as Holly Road.

Anyway, I'm sure it applies to standing or lying down too. Even plain old "being" would do.

Sergeant Ernest Hopkins, summoned to give evidence by the prosecution, reported his unit had been called to Farringdon Street on Saturday morning at approximately 3 am, following complaints of a disturbance by local residents.

The police had remonstrated with the defendant, and duly arrested him at the scene of the incident.

When questioned by the defence, Mr George Fox, as to the altercation, Sergeant Hopkins took out his notebook and read as follows:

Pascal was a philosopher and mathematician rather than a Pilates teacher.

“We were told the defendant had been throwing stones at the window of commercial premises, sir.

When we arrived on the scene and approached him, he was relieving himself against a lamp post and shouting while brandishing what later transpired to be a half bottle of Mundie’s wine. It’s one of the lesser known South African brands, sir.

Cheap and poor quality, sir. He was shouting “Horny swanky mallypants”, he was, and, although I did not comprehend the actual meaning of this, the situation naturally conveyed to me the impression we was dealing with an aggressive and offensive drunk, sir, and so we proceeded ...”

Well, with all the war parallels being mentioned, what with Her Majesty (and Matt) referring to Vera Lynn and the media referring to Boris as a wartime PM (at least as long as he was able to stand up), the BBC may have become stuck in the in the wartime mindset and subconsciously concluded that Italy may be planning to attack their neighbours with a virus.

“Horny swanky mallypants?” repeated the defence, to a certain amount of sniggering around the court. “It doesn’t seem so injurious to me, officer. Rather childish, perhaps, but hardly life-threatening, wouldn’t you agree?”

They may also just have been infected by the contemporary American fashion of leaving out hyphens in compound adjectives, of course.

Sergeant Hopkins cleared his throat.

“Yes, sir, ahem, but that wasn’t what the defendant had really said.

He shouted it again and again, and in fact since we were none the wiser I eventually asked him to write it down, sir.”

Or perhaps their editor has been infected by the virus.

“What?” interrupted Mr Justice Whitbread, leaning across from the bench.

“You actually asked him to write it down?”

Regardless of the punctuation, your son may need some positive encouragement, unless he had his mouth full of sweets and really intended to say, ‘you’re a cheat, dad’ (perhaps he believed you had cheated in a game).

Some people find it difficult to distinguish between the ‘ch’ sound and the ‘sh’ sounds, particularly here in Germany, where I was asked for a shipkarte (ship card) one of the first times I went to see a doctor after moving to Germany. I wondered why they thought I had a ship or at least a card related to a ship and what that had to do with the doctor, so I asked them what a shipkarte was.

What they meant was ‘chip card’, the purpose of which is to streamline the payment process, as healthcare isn’t free here.

“Yes m’lud.

Regulations.

For the report, m’lud.

In the force we have to note things down word for word, you see.

Regulation 478 stroke C, subsection A, paragraph 9 (d), sir.

So I gave him pen and paper, m’lud.

Took ever so long to write it, too, sir”, said the officer sternly, drawing himself up to his full height.

“Cos drink had been taken, obviously, sir”, he added, to the titters of the general public.

“Bit of a shaky hand, plus he kept humming and muttering Baby One More Time, gyrating his hips provocatively with one hand clutching his parts rather crudely, sir.

It’s a song by that Britney Spears, sir.

She’s dolled up and sexy as a schoolgirl with all red-red lipstick and pigtails, see, and when the bell rings at the end of class, she …”

Nobody speaks English here and some of them don’t even speak German, but an undecipherable Saxon dialect, which reminds me of Luxemburgish, which is equally undecipherable.

“Quite, quite, Sergeant”, interrupted Mr Fox.

“But what did he write in the end?”

Quarantine tortilla

Sergeant Hopkins consulted his notebook again.

“Honi soit qui mal y pense, sir, not the other horny mallypants thing.

It’s French, sir – I looked it up at the station later.

Means, er, Evil be to Him what Evil Thinks.

That’s what he said”.

Apr 11

“WHO, Sergeant”, Mr Fox corrected him.

Cookery Day.

I know you’re going to laugh, and I’m expecting a horrendous backlash from the Spanish translator community too, but today I’m going to explain how to make Spanish tortilla.

Sergeant Hopkins’ brow creased over in surprise.

“Who, sir?

You won't believe it, but suddenly when I read this recipe, I could not help but prepare a tortilla on the spot!

Why, the defendant, sir.

I just said so” (more laughter).

“Shouting and bawling it, he was, sir.

While urinating, as I stated before, and …”

Of course, getting chorizo is not easy when you are in quarantine and even less outside Spain.

So I went without chorizo.

Like every good German I have always sufficient potatoes at home, and I had got some eggs and onions, too.

So there was everything I needed.

The only difference compared to the recipe, I salted the potatoes after having fried them.

As I was so statisfied with the result, I'll prepare another tortilla probably next week.:-)

“No, no, Sergeant”, interrupted the defence gently, “you’re mistaken in your …”

No beer, since I had been shopping last time only two days ago and there are disheartening lines in front of the supermarkets.

The Sergeant’s puzzlement heightened.

“No, there’s no mistake, sir, it was that bloke over there all right.”

His face registered a certain amount of indignation as he added:

“That’s why we’re all here in court, sir.

Oh yes, we found him in faganti.

Well in faganti, he was.

In faganti and red-handed too.

In faganti or I never seen it, sir”.

Happy Easter to everyone that is in quarantine or not, stay healthy and keep distance anyway

“No,” said Mr Fox patiently, amid some open guffawing from the public gallery, “I only meant WHO as in …”

Of course, getting chorizo is not easy when you are in quarantine and even less outside Spain.

The judge banged his gavel. “Silence in court!

Better keep an eye on the Lidl catalogue, then, and grab some when it's Spanish week.

Mr Fox, could we possibly get on with things here?

@Christel - good job you couldn't get any chorizo

I’ve two assault and batteries, a couple of cases of fraud, four burglaries and a grievous bodily harm to hear this morning, and unless you intend to call Noam Chomsky as a witness on this one, I’d rather like to find time for a spot of lunch today, not to mention my wife and family and a round of golf.

So if you could see your way to … mmm?”

Good for you!

“I’m sorry, your honour”, said the defence lawyer, hurriedly …

“So, Sergeant”, he continued, “it was not more offensive, even, than the mollypants whatever-it-was you mistook it for in the first place.

Rather pseudo-intellectual, in fact.”

But ...

“Yes sir, perhaps sir, if you like to call it that, sir”, said Hopkins, “but then there was the aforementioned stone-throwing and, well, after he wrote that down, he jumped back a pace, assumed a kind of martial arts stance, said something about Dodge City - along with certain lewd comments I can’t repeat here out of respect for the court, like, sir, but he did use the F word, the B word and indeed the C word, sir - and offered to take us all on, sir.

It was at this point that two constables restrained and overpowered him, then we brought him down the station and booked him, and he, er, threw up in the cell, sir.

That cell had just been cleaned, too, sir”, added the sergeant ruefully (general laughter around the room, and this reporter noticed some surreptitious heaving of official shoulders among the other police officers and clerks present).

I realise I didn't explain myself very well or, looking back at what I wrote, I only explained myself cryptically.

The chorizo is only a joke.

British chef Jamie Oliver caused considerable controversy last year or the year before when he suggested chorizo could also be used in Spanish paella.

Having said that, you'll see all kinds of tortilla all over Spain, but the classic "tortilla española" or "tortilla de patata" has just egg and potato and onion.

The onion is optional for many people, and so you might be asked in a bar which you prefer if they have both on offer at the counter.

Although personally it wouldn't occur to me make one without onion.

Onion gives it a certain amount of oomph.

“Silence, silence!” cried the judge.

“And enough of this nonsensical nincompoopery – it’s tantamount to bringing my court into disrepute. Stand up there, young fellow my lad.

What have you got to say for yourself about all this?”

page-16

The defendant stood up and admitted the charge, claiming in his defence that the pressure of life had brought him to such extremes.

He acknowledged he had been “tired and emotional” at the time but was now, he said, “fully repentant” of his conduct.

He sincerely apologised to those concerned, and with all due shame begged the indulgence of the Court as a first-time offender.

Local time: 07:12

The defendant was sentenced to three months’ imprisonment, suspended due to the absence of any criminal record, and bound over to keep the peace for a year and a day.

Try the "Mona de Pascua"

\*\*\*\*\*\*

As far as I know, the traditional "tortilla" (in Spain) or "tortilha" (in Portugal) hasn't got "chorizo" or "choriza" in it.

You can add it to the recipe as an option, if you like its flavour, or you want to commit an atrocity to this emblematic dish In Easter, try to prepare the "Mona de Pascua" (known as "Folar da Páscoa" in Portugal).

It is very easy to make. You only need flour, sugar, eggs and a raising agent.

The thing that sets this dessert apart is the hardboiled eggs that are baked into the centre of this "roscón" for decoration.

A Happy and Healthy Easter to everyone

I’ve been invaded by work today after the holiday, so I’m leaving it all disjointed and incomplete like that, and buggered if I’m writing any more today.

The response tomorrow.

Maybe.

I’ve got a heap of ironing to do as well after the two washing machine loads yesterday, I don’t mind telling you, and I’m out of pasta, ham, eggs, cereal and tuna, not that I eat them all together, and there’ll probably be a queue of two dozen people social bloody distancing outside the supermarket like there was at the fruit and veg shop this morning, and you’d think that a lockdown would mean much more time on your hands, you know, but it bloody well doesn’t.

Local time: 08:12

I hope it!

Sunday 12 April

I hope the death toll really begins to fall in Spain and in other countries.

I truly wish that!

Apr 12

We don't have high numbers of fatalities and confirmed cases as we can see in Spain, our neighbour country.

People say Portugal acted with anticipation, discipline and solidarity to fight against the coronavírus.

I believe Portuguese began to isolate themselves voluntarily, and supporting each other, in particular, in Northern region, the most affected part of the country.

Let's hope the epidemiological curve becomes flattened enough in order to slow the coronavirus, and to stop it for once.

Urbi et Orbi on TV.

Otherwise nothing going on around here.

Headline "Distribution of public transport masks source of dispute between central government and Basque government".

Wednesday 15 April

Politicians are up in arms now about anything.

Pedro Sánchez says he's going to do this, others say he shouldn't do it.

Pedro Sánchez says he isn't going to do this, others say he should.

Pedro Sánchez farts loudly, others say he should show more respect for the dead by farting silently.

Pedro Sánchez farts silently, others say he should be more up front by farting loudly and therefore transparently.

Apr 15

But I have a feeling politicians are yapping so much to show the people that they're still working to earn the salary that nobody will be taking from them no matter what, even though we have a fair idea they're sitting otiose in a gaff much bigger than ours and farting loudly, silently, or not at all.

All in the same boat, they like to say.

Right.

Oops, just farted.

Very loudly.

"'The worst is over'", cries the headline.

It's a quote by Basque Government spokesman Josu Erkoreka.

The one wearing the purple gloves in yesterday's photo.

Something in the wind

Death count continues to fall - 567 yesterday, although with a number like that, you begin to wonder if they're making them up.

It’s always best to fart transparently

Doesn't console me.

Things are getting to me lately.

Ironically, it's the Moan to Mervyn bollocks that's getting to me, I reckon, too many dark thoughts that remind me of too many dark episodes, so I'm leaving it for a bit.

Meanwhile, talking of numbers and dark thoughts, here's another blast from a misspent past.

Today it's all there is, and it's what it is.

As Jack Malone himself might have said:

Fawn with the wind

Jack Malone, Private Detective - Jimmy the Weasel

Not sure transparency is the best way to go on every occasion.

Wasn't it Confucius who said,

"When the regal master passes by, the faithful servant kneels reverently and silently farts"?

The phone rang at four in the morning.

Nine times out of ten, when I heard the phone ring in my office at that time it meant two things.

One, it meant it was a dame, and two, it meant it was trouble.

And it meant I was in the office at the time.

That makes three things, now I come to think of it, but who’s counting anyways, we’re not even at line five or six yet, and the place is coming down with numbers, so let’s get on with it already:

Welldone Boris!!!

You may think that's mighty strange, I’ll allow, me being in the office at that time.

Hell, it wasn’t as if I had no place to go - I had an apartment out there somewheres for sure, but I never remembered getting there and I never remembered leaving neither, so I mostly stayed put at the office to keep things simple.

The prime minister is doing well, I am glad despite being opposed to tory politics in general.

I wonder if the PMs personal health victory will be a symbol of our general victory over Covid.

Denmark plans to open up shop next week, Austria and Norway say they will begin loosening of the lockdown.

Is this the light at the end of the tunnel?

“Broads,” I was thinking when it rang.

“Can’t live with them, can't live without them."

Sure, it was one of those days.

I was crashed out at the office, just me and Mr Bourbon, thinking back to when a dame had messed with my mind big time, so bad I’d crawled right inside a bottle of strong booze to forget, to remember, to remember to forget, or to forget to remember, or forget to forget, even, and stayed there.

Is it over?

I took a slug of the stuff as I answered.

It was cheap and nasty, and that was the way I felt and that was the way I liked it.

Washed over me cheap and nasty too, like a pool of warm blood seeping from a shotgun blast to a squealer’s head.

I laughed as I felt the liquor rip the fuzz off my tongue and dissolve the plaque of hardened sludge on my palate better than paint-stripper, and just as economical.

Yes, I laughed a long low laugh.

Then I laughed a short low laugh, followed by a long loud laugh, and after that a short loud laugh, then a long low loud laugh, but I gotta admit by that stage I was getting kinda confused.

Can I go back to my shit life now?

The broad on the phone sounded a little edgy, what with all the different kinds of laughing and all.

I hope you’re joking, Brian, because you don’t have a shit life and neither does Boris.

Other people have shit lives.

Some of them have really, really shit lives.

Take Dolly, for instance.

Dolly’s ten years old going on eighteen.

She has an engaging waifish smile, albeit with a few black teeth here and there, and a few missing because she gets knocked around a lot.

She doesn’t smell too good today because she hasn’t had a shower, and she can only grab a shower if it happens to rain and...

See more

“Mr Jack Malone?

Ok

Are you Jack Malone, the detective?”

Yes

Only just managed to hold back a belch as I replied.

“Sure I am, ma’am,” I gulped.

“Leastways, I was all day today and yesterday, but I can’t speak for any time previous without my attorney present.

If I had one.”

Monday 13 April

“I do apologize for the lateness of the hour,” she went on, “but I am extremely concerned about my husband.

He’s disappeared without trace, you see.

My name is Fairweather, Doris Fairweather.”

Apr 13

Now, it could just have been the bourbon, but it seemed to me that being called Fairweather Doris and ending up married to a guy with the surname Fairweather was a whole bunch of screwed-up luck, but I wasn’t about to tell her that.

It’s been a calendar month since I nipped back to the gym, never to return because it closed without warning the next day, to pick up my gear just in case.

“So jump in a cab and come round the office," I told her.

"Jack Malone Private Detective never sleeps.”

“230,000 Basque industry and construction workers go back to jobs gradually”, the headline announces.

This is because Sánchez had placed a 6-day ban on non-essential employment until today, presumably as a measure to give the country a better chance of cutting contagion with a short, sharp shock.

Endlessly criticised, natch.

These days they even carp at the tie you wear (some people seen with black ties in parliament), so who shall ´scape whipping for the more important things?

“Isn’t that the Pinkerton motto?”

And the rentrée will be gradual because Easter Monday’s a public holiday here and in seven other regions.

619 deaths in Spain yesterday, and the local rag now puts the local coffin count on the front page too, 39.

“Well, yes, lady.

The difference being they never sleep at Pinkerton’s because it's a 24-hour outfit with a helluva lot of staff, but me, I never sleep because I never get to bed.”

Oh, and I can feel a “Moan to Mervyn” coming on, but maybe later.

Got to get the Secret Ingredient (chicken cube this time) into the chickpeas before the Basques start swarming around the kitchen asking questions you’ve got no answer for.

When she arrived at my door, I could see Doris Fairweather was a fine looker all right.

Said she was from a place called “New Jersey”.

Had to think about that one for a minute, and then I realized she meant what we call Noo Joizee round here.

The way she said it, sounds like you've been to the store.

One big-stepping classy dame, I thought as she big-stepped classily thru the door, and when I see a big-stepping classy dame my guard goes up.

To make sure she don't end up stepping big and classy all over me, see.

A big-spending classy dame, too, judging by the fancy clothes.

A big stepper and big spender's husband might decide to disappear just to stop paying for all that big stepping and big spending.

But I'd been in this business long enough to know that certain people had a habit of making other people disappear pronto when the other people stopped doling out bucks, too.

Jack Malone was working on a hunch, and reckoned he knew what the score was with the Fairweather broad’s husband even before she started to explain.

I decided not to waste any time:

Tuesday 14 April

“So, Mrs Fairweather, were your husband and you having any, uh, financial problems, let’s say?" was my first question.

Apr 14

“Why, yes, as a matter of fact we were,” she said, surprised and embarrassed, “but last month my husband told me he had secured a loan from a gentleman who has a club near here.

Jimmy’s Joint.

We seemed to be fine for a while, and then Norman - that's my husband - was nervous for days on end, and three days ago I came home and there he was - gone.”

517 deaths in Spain yesterday, and 27 in the Basque Country, so the count is finally falling again.

Many more people going back to work today after the Monday holiday, and they’re giving out masks at train, metro and bus stations.

I knowed it, I just knowed it ...

“Masks handed out today to go to work can only be used for four hours”, warns the headline.

The idea is you get one on the outward journey, and one on the way home.

After you’ve bought your ticket or swiped your card, naturally, because there are a lot of smart Alecs about.

“You don’t mean Jimmy the Weasel, do you, Doris?”

Below there’s a photo of the Basque President visiting a Covid-19 screen protector production plant, all masked-and-gloved up.

You can tell he’s the main man because only he’s wearing one of the screens.

Like him, three others are wearing blue gloves.

Maybe it’s a rank thing, because another of his deputies has purple gloves.

There’s another man in the picture with his hands behind his back.

Why’s that?

“I suppose so.

It was Jimmy something.

So you know him?”

Could be because he arrived late and they’d run out of gloves, so he isn’t wearing any, and that's bad PR.

Could be he’s lower in the pecking order, and had to settle for the lurid pink gloves with teddy-bear motifs.

Could be he has no hands.

I didn't know Jimmy the Weasel so intimately, but I did know it was a lousy idea to take a loan off him.

People that couldn’t pay it back didn’t stay people too long.

Today’s also the 89th anniversary of the declaration of Spain’s Second Republic, so we can expect a lot of the old Republican tricolour flags out on the balconies.

There was a time when the present Queen would have been flying one of those herself when she was anchor woman at Spanish TV all those years ago, or so they say, but those republican sympathies mellow and fade to naught after one has been palaced up a tad.

“And why do they call him Jimmy the Weasel?" asked Doris.

Talking of flags, and masks, we’re now seeing that a mask is not just a mask.

There are masks and there are masks.

Some politicians have got hold of masks with a little Spanish flag on them, and so it’s only a matter of time before we see little Basque flags, little Catalan flags, little Galician flags etc. on other masks. One country, but worra lorra flags.

During the recent Catalan cafuffle, now largely shelved but not forgotten due to you-know-what, there was a lot of talk about flags.

I noticed during one “voice of reason” demonstration that someone was holding a placard saying

“A flag is a piece of cloth”.

Well.

Easy to say.

Where I come from, and in many other places where many other people come from, a flag is very much a piece of wroth.

“Because he looks like one.

Because he has one.

Because he breeds them.

I’ve no idea, lady.

But you sure as hell don’t get to be called Jimmy the Weasel because you’re a swell guy, a gentleman like you said.

Listen, Doris, I’m real sorry and all, but I’m dollar sure I know what the take is with your old man.

Jimmy the Weasel’s taken him for a ride.”

Meanwhile, “Moan to Mervyn” has received a desperate plea, but I’m still desperately dealing with it and it could well be a desperate Matter of Life and Death, so watch this space.

“A ride?”

Moan to Mervyn

“That’s what I said, ma’am, a ride.

But a ride with a one-way ticket."

I can’t go on.

My only solace when I wake up in the morning is the bottle of gin on the bedside table.

Well, actually, it’s not my only solace.

There’s also the solace of the cold spliff in the ashtray I light straight after a few shots of the gin.

And a still photo of Britney Spears with legs spread wide as she dances.

My only three solaces.

And I’ve been in trouble with the law, too.

Look what they wrote about me in the paper only yesterday:

“One-way ticket?"

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“Sure, a one-way ticket, lady.

You gotta understand he’s been iced.”

MILLTOWN BUGLE

“Iced?”

Courts Section – Martin Friar reports

“You bet, doll.

With a heater.”

Curious scenes and a certain amount of confusion at the District Court yesterday as it heard a case of disorderly conduct leading to a breach of the peace in the city by an unemployed person who gave his address as Holly Road.

“Heater?”

Sergeant Ernest Hopkins, summoned to give evidence by the prosecution, reported his unit had been called to Farringdon Street on Saturday morning at approximately 3 am, following complaints of a disturbance by local residents.

The police had remonstrated with the defendant, and duly arrested him at the scene of the incident.

When questioned by the defence, Mr George Fox, as to the altercation, Sergeant Hopkins took out his notebook and read as follows:

“Say, what gives, is there an echo in here?

“We were told the defendant had been throwing stones at the window of commercial premises, sir.

When we arrived on the scene and approached him, he was relieving himself against a lamp post and shouting while brandishing what later transpired to be a half bottle of Mundie’s wine.

It’s one of the lesser known South African brands, sir.

Cheap and poor quality, sir.

He was shouting “Horny swanky mallypants”, he was, and, although I did not comprehend the actual meaning of this, the situation naturally conveyed to me the impression we was dealing with an aggressive and offensive drunk, sir, and so we proceeded ...”

You got it, a heater. L

ike the Spaghettis say, he a-sleeps widda da fishes.

He’ll never show.”

“Horny swanky mallypants?” repeated the defence, to a certain amount of sniggering around the court.

“It doesn’t seem so injurious to me, officer.

Rather childish, perhaps, but hardly life-threatening, wouldn’t you agree?”

“Mr Malone, please talk sense.

How can anyone use a heater to ice anything?

Sergeant Hopkins cleared his throat.

“Yes, sir, ahem, but that wasn’t what the defendant had really said.

He shouted it again and again, and in fact since we were none the wiser I eventually asked him to write it down, sir.”

It defies logic.

And what is this nonsense about sleeping with fish?”

“What?” interrupted Mr Justice Whitbread, leaning across from the bench. “You actually asked him to write it down?”

I heaved a sigh, took it real slow, and explained.

I gotta tell you, she didn’t seem too upset about my little theory.

She just sniffed a little into a real pretty lace handkerchief, was all.

By the time she looked up, her mind was on the ball again.

“Yes m’lud.

Regulations.

For the report, m’lud.

In the force we have to note things down word for word, you see.

Regulation 478 stroke C, subsection A, paragraph 9 (d), sir.

So I gave him pen and paper, m’lud.

Took ever so long to write it, too, sir”, said the officer sternly, drawing himself up to his full height.

“Cos drink had been taken, obviously, sir”, he added, to the titters of the general public.

“Bit of a shaky hand, plus he kept humming and muttering Baby One More Time, gyrating his hips provocatively with one hand clutching his parts rather crudely, sir.

It’s a song by that Britney Spears, sir.

She’s dolled up and sexy as a schoolgirl with all red-red lipstick and pigtails, see, and when the bell rings at the end of class, she …”

“You see, Mr Malone, in that case, I can’t collect on the insurance if there's no body.

Norman had a policy for fifty thousand dollars.

And if they never find him, like you said … unless somebody could talk to Jimmy the Weasel as to his, er, whereabouts … and the three of us could come to some, shall we say, monetary arrangement … ?”

“Quite, quite, Sergeant”, interrupted Mr Fox.

“But what did he write in the end?”

She was a quick thinker, the Fairweather.

The little grief I’d seen had been replaced by greed with a capital $. Norman wasn’t her late husband no more, he was fifty big ones.

And I was being cut in on the act, too.

It was a little ways out of the gray area of principles, because sure, Jack Malone has his principles, but he has bills to pay also, and those greenbacks don’t grow on trees.

Sergeant Hopkins consulted his notebook again.

“Honi soit qui mal y pense, sir, not the other horny mallypants thing.

It’s French, sir – I looked it up at the station later.

Means, er, Evil be to Him what Evil Thinks.

That’s what he said”.

“Tell you what I’ll do, lady.

It’s a long shot, but it just might work.”

“WHO, Sergeant”, Mr Fox corrected him.

Gotta admit I always get a real kick out of saying that one.

Sergeant Hopkins’ brow creased over in surprise.

“Who, sir?

“I can’t promise you nuthin’”, I went on, “but I'll go talk to Jimmy the Weasel and see first if I’m right, and second if there's anything we can do about it.”

Why, the defendant, sir. I just said so” (more laughter).

“Shouting and bawling it, he was, sir.

While urinating, as I stated before, and …”

So that evening I moseyed down to Jimmy the Weasel’s speakeasy four or five blocks away.

They call them speakeasies because it’s a swell idea to speak easy and watch your dad-blamed mouth with the wise guys if you don’t want to find yourself trying on some cement boots for size.

Jimmy’s Joint was jumping when I walked in.

Jimmy's Joint.

The joint with the most wise guys per square meter in the whole neighborhood.

They were all standing around in their flashy suits and hats, knocking back the laughter juice, slapping backs, brushing little specks of dust off their lapels, jabbing at some other guy’s ribs, yapping “Hey muddafugga, you crazy?", "Get da fuggoudda heah", like the wise guys do.

“No, no, Sergeant”, interrupted the defence gently, “you’re mistaken in your …”

At the middle of it all on a sofa I could see Mr Wise Guy himself.

Jimmy the Weasel.

Jimmy ran the whole range of outfits, what he called business and what the DA called ill-gotten gains but couldn't prove spit, mostly thru dance halls and clubs.

A little fat guy. Kind of comical-looking, but understand there was nuthin’ funny about Jimmy the Weasel.

A truckload of guys had underestimated Jimmy that way.

Guys that weren’t around no more.

The Sergeant’s puzzlement heightened.

“No, there’s no mistake, sir, it was that bloke over there all right.”

His face registered a certain amount of indignation as he added:

“That’s why we’re all here in court, sir.

Oh yes, we found him in faganti.

Well in faganti, he was.

In faganti and red-handed too.

In faganti or I never seen it, sir”.

Sitting across from Jimmy was his right-hand man, rumored to be a specialist in just that - guys that weren't around no more.

Leastways, he made real sure they didn’t reappear.

Ace Reilly was built like a bull.

Ace Reilly got plenty exercise.

He kept an assortment of shovels, picks and spades in the trunk of his automobile.

Ace could dig a shallow grave in under a half hour on a moment’s notice.

Taller clients or dispatches upstate lengthened the timeline a tad, but that was what Ace did best.

He sure had an eerie way of looking at everyone Jimmy talked to as well, like he was measuring up just in case there would be a call-out later.

“No,” said Mr Fox patiently, amid some open guffawing from the public gallery, “I only meant WHO as in …”

Moll was there too.

Whether that was a name or a profession, people didn’t like to ask.

As usual, she was covered in bling from head to toe - rings, necklaces, brooches, and even a tiara.

That night she was smothered in furs too.

A minx in minks.

The judge banged his gavel. “Silence in court!

What a pack, I thought as I approached.

Pack was the right word, too.

What with the King of Clubs, the Queen of Diamonds, the Ace of Spades, and Jack, I figured we were only short a ten for a neat-looking hand in five-card stud.

Mr Fox, could we possibly get on with things here?

Moll looked up.

I’ve two assault and batteries, a couple of cases of fraud, four burglaries and a grievous bodily harm to hear this morning, and unless you intend to call Noam Chomsky as a witness on this one, I’d rather like to find time for a spot of lunch today, not to mention my wife and family and a round of golf.

So if you could see your way to … mmm?”

“Mr Malone. How nice to see you.

Do you like my new wrap?"

“I’m sorry, your honour”, said the defence lawyer, hurriedly … “So, Sergeant”, he continued, “it was not more offensive, even, than the mollypants whatever-it-was you mistook it for in the first place.

Rather pseudo-intellectual, in fact.”

I did a take on the dead animal hanging around her neck.

“Yes sir, perhaps sir, if you like to call it that, sir”, said Hopkins, “but then there was the aforementioned stone-throwing and, well, after he wrote that down, he jumped back a pace, assumed a kind of martial arts stance, said something about Dodge City - along with certain lewd comments I can’t repeat here out of respect for the court, like, sir, but he did use the F word, the B word and indeed the C word, sir - and offered to take us all on, sir.

It was at this point that two constables restrained and overpowered him, then we brought him down the station and booked him, and he, er, threw up in the cell, sir.

That cell had just been cleaned, too, sir”, added the sergeant ruefully (general laughter around the room, and this reporter noticed some surreptitious heaving of official shoulders among the other police officers and clerks present).

“Fine duds for sure." I turned to Jimmy.

“Must come pretty expensive, huh Jimmy?"

“Silence, silence!” cried the judge.

“And enough of this nonsensical nincompoopery – it’s tantamount to bringing my court into disrepute. Stand up there, young fellow my lad.

What have you got to say for yourself about all this?”

Jimmy nodded.

“Cost me two hundred bucks.

It’s a stole.”

The defendant stood up and admitted the charge, claiming in his defence that the pressure of life had brought him to such extremes.

He acknowledged he had been “tired and emotional” at the time but was now, he said, “fully repentant” of his conduct.

He sincerely apologised to those concerned, and with all due shame begged the indulgence of the Court as a first-time offender.

“More like a steal”, I said.

The defendant was sentenced to three months’ imprisonment, suspended due to the absence of any criminal record, and bound over to keep the peace for a year and a day.

“Haven’t seen ya on the patch lately, Malone,” said Jimmy.

“We was just talkin' 'bout ya.”

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“Were, Jimmy”, said Moll.

I’ve been invaded by work today after the holiday, so I’m leaving it all disjointed and incomplete like that, and buggered if I’m writing any more today.

The response tomorrow.

Maybe.

I’ve got a heap of ironing to do as well after the two washing machine loads yesterday, I don’t mind telling you, and I’m out of pasta, ham, eggs, cereal and tuna, not that I eat them all together, and there’ll probably be a queue of two dozen people social bloody distancing outside the supermarket like there was at the fruit and veg shop this morning, and you’d think that a lockdown would mean much more time on your hands, you know, but it bloody well doesn’t.

“Where?

I hope it!

Why, right here with you and Ace, honey-bunch,” said Jimmy.

“Broads”, he guffawed.

“Can't live with them, can't live without them, huh Jack?"

I hope the death toll really begins to fall in Spain and in other countries.

I truly wish that!

“I’ve heard it said,” I agreed.

We don't have high numbers of fatalities and confirmed cases as we can see in Spain, our neighbour country.

People say Portugal acted with anticipation, discipline and solidarity to fight against the coronavírus.

I believe Portuguese began to isolate themselves voluntarily, and supporting each other, in particular, in Northern region, the most affected part of the country.

Let's hope the epidemiological curve becomes flattened enough in order to slow the coronavirus, and to stop it for once.

Moll rolled her eyes.

Jimmy the Weasel wasn’t no grammarian, he was a mobster.

You can take the man out of Hell’s Kitchen, but you can't take Hell’s Kitchen out of the man.

He was watching me carefully with his little piggy eyes.

Not that I had ever gotten in Jimmy’s way because I preferred to go on breathing, and, like I said, he was smart enough to never get his hands dirty himself, but he knew what Jack Malone did for a living, and he wasn’t taking no chances.

Wednesday 15 April

“So what’s with ya, Jack?

Apr 15

Ya welcome just so long as ya not here in an official capacity.”

"'The worst is over'", cries the headline.

It's a quote by Basque Government spokesman Josu Erkoreka.

The one wearing the purple gloves in yesterday's photo.

“Well, yes and no, Jimmy.

Let's just say I've got a business proposition …”

Death count continues to fall - 567 yesterday, although with a number like that, you begin to wonder if they're making them up.

There ain’t much more to tell.

It all went smoothly in Jimmy’s office. While he didn’t actually admit to anything, when I mentioned the name Norman Fairweather I could see he was wise to it.

Said he’d get Ace on the job, see if he could “find” the body for the poor dame.

I thought to myself it would put a little variety into Ace's work, since he was more used to putting folks to bed than waking them up, but I wasn’t about to say so.

That wasn’t my concern.

I was just the middleman.

The stiff was produced, Doris was paid, so was Jimmy, and so was I.

Jimmy went back to racketeering, Doris went back to Noo Joizee, and I went back to being a downmarket private eye waging an uneven battle as a hapless anti-hero underdog amid the upper échelons of organized crime, a rough diamond with a heart, striving to make sense of life, love and loneliness in an itty bitty gritty world of mindless violence.

But I could never make sense of any of it, so I just went back to the bottle to try to forget that dame I kept remembering to remember and forget all at the same time.

Doesn't console me.

Things are getting to me lately.

Ironically, it's the Moan to Mervyn bollocks that's getting to me, I reckon, too many dark thoughts that remind me of too many dark episodes, so I'm leaving it for a bit.

Meanwhile, talking of numbers and dark thoughts, here's another blast from a misspent past.

Today it's all there is, and it's what it is.

As Jack Malone himself might have said:

Broads.

Can’t live with them, can't live without them.

Jack Malone, Private Detective - Jimmy the Weasel

Thursday 16 April

The phone rang at four in the morning.

Nine times out of ten, when I heard the phone ring in my office at that time it meant two things.

One, it meant it was a dame, and two, it meant it was trouble.

And it meant I was in the office at the time.

That makes three things, now I come to think of it, but who’s counting anyways, we’re not even at line five or six yet, and the place is coming down with numbers, so let’s get on with it already:

Apr 16

You may think that's mighty strange, I’ll allow, me being in the office at that time.

Hell, it wasn’t as if I had no place to go - I had an apartment out there somewheres for sure, but I never remembered getting there and I never remembered leaving neither, so I mostly stayed put at the office to keep things simple.

523 deaths in Spain yesterday.

Might be more.

Or fewer, you wouldn’t know.

All sorts of tangential debates are kicking in on death statistics:

was it a coronavirus death pure and simple, was it a coronavirus death with no previous symptoms, was it a coronavirus death simply exacerbated by previous conditions, was it a coronavirus death at home not registered at the hospital, was it a coronavirus death …?

“Broads,” I was thinking when it rang.

“Can’t live with them, can't live without them."

Sure, it was one of those days. I was crashed out at the office, just me and Mr Bourbon, thinking back to when a dame had messed with my mind big time, so bad I’d crawled right inside a bottle of strong booze to forget, to remember, to remember to forget, or to forget to remember, or forget to forget, even, and stayed there.

I’m beginning to lose faith in the experts because, as I said recently, there seem to be hordes of them coming out of the woodwork now expounding knowledgeably by video with their bookcases behind them, but one Spanish epidemiology expert was reporting from California last night and I have to agree with him in that the debate is not whether it’s XXX deaths or XXX give or take a few, but that it’s high enough to be doing something about it instead of everyone pissing around.

I took a slug of the stuff as I answered.

It was cheap and nasty, and that was the way I felt and that was the way I liked it.

Washed over me cheap and nasty too, like a pool of warm blood seeping from a shotgun blast to a squealer’s head.

I laughed as I felt the liquor rip the fuzz off my tongue and dissolve the plaque of hardened sludge on my palate better than paint-stripper, and just as economical.

Yes, I laughed a long low laugh.

Then I laughed a short low laugh, followed by a long loud laugh, and after that a short loud laugh, then a long low loud laugh, but I gotta admit by that stage I was getting kinda confused.

I repeat, I’m not a socialist, far from it, but I have nothing but contempt for all these smarmy overpaid oafs stirring the shit with the PM now, the same smarmy overpaid oafs who were incapable of reaching an agreement to even form a government for the best part of two or three years, droning on and on about the tragedy of redundancies and a police state when they certainly don’t even have to give a second thought to their own redundancies or the police state because, apparently, shit-stirring is vital for the good of the Spanish people the oafs claim to represent.

Although maybe it’s inevitable.

In a previous era, at least they were behind the likes of Churchill in a tricky corner, and had the decency to let him get on with it, and wait a few years until they booted him out of office.

But I'll remember those smarmy overpaid oafs when they ask for my vote down the line in the name of solidarity and the people.

The broad on the phone sounded a little edgy, what with all the different kinds of laughing and all.

Talking of Churchill, as you may have observed, I'm definitely seeing his "black dog" these days.

“Mr Jack Malone?

Diary April 16

Are you Jack Malone, the detective?”

I went to a hospital for a medical interpreting assignment.

A very tall building indeed and I hate elevators (hate is an understatement).

So I walk in and check on numerous elevators, preferably with other people inside so I am not left all alone inside in case it gets stuck somewhere in between the two floors.

So I enter a rather smallish elevator with two other people inside, one person pressing the buttons asking us all what button to press for us.

I say "floor 12, please".

As we move upwards, he says to me "Ma'm, I can't see number 12, I pressed 14 for you, so you may just walk two floors downs using the stairs".

I say "Fine, thanks, no problem".

The elevators stops.

I can't wait for the door to open just to pop out.

So I do and I am relieved.

I walk around trying to find the exit with staircase in order to go down and reach my destination floor - floor #12.

However, I walk around in circles and can't seem to find the exit, then I eventually find one, but the staircase looks like a maze.

I decide to walk around the floor 14 in order to ask for help and as I walk around things start getting a little suspicious.

I can see epidemiologists in white overalls (now this is a literal overall with white pillow case over their head and black welding glasses), I see a lot of buzz, I see spit and blood on the floor, drama everywhere.

I start getting even more suspicious slowly stepping into a panic mode.

I start running down toward the maze-like staircase, where somewhere in the middle of the route down towards the floor 12 (not reached yet) I meet an acquaintance and tell her about what I saw on floor 14 and that I assume it's the floor for Corona infected people only, she answers "Yes, it is".

Only just managed to hold back a belch as I replied.

“Sure I am, ma’am,” I gulped.

“Leastways, I was all day today and yesterday, but I can’t speak for any time previous without my attorney present.

If I had one.”

Can't remember what happened next.

I did not wake up in sweats as the night was rather chilly.

I just woke up.

“I do apologize for the lateness of the hour,” she went on, “but I am extremely concerned about my husband.

He’s disappeared without trace, you see.

My name is Fairweather, Doris Fairweather.”

Nightmare

Now, it could just have been the bourbon, but it seemed to me that being called Fairweather Doris and ending up married to a guy with the surname Fairweather was a whole bunch of screwed-up luck, but I wasn’t about to tell her that.

Well, I believed that one right up to the end, Lingua 5B!

“So jump in a cab and come round the office," I told her.

"Jack Malone Private Detective never sleeps.”

page-17

“Isn’t that the Pinkerton motto?”

Local time: 21:49

“Well, yes, lady.

The difference being they never sleep at Pinkerton’s because it's a 24-hour outfit with a helluva lot of staff, but me, I never sleep because I never get to bed.”

A different diary ("TV journal")

When she arrived at my door, I could see Doris Fairweather was a fine looker all right.

Said she was from a place called “New Jersey”.

Had to think about that one for a minute, and then I realized she meant what we call Noo Joizee round here.

The way she said it, sounds like you've been to the store.

One big-stepping classy dame, I thought as she big-stepped classily thru the door, and when I see a big-stepping classy dame my guard goes up.

To make sure she don't end up stepping big and classy all over me, see.

A big-spending classy dame, too, judging by the fancy clothes.

A big stepper and big spender's husband might decide to disappear just to stop paying for all that big stepping and big spending.

But I'd been in this business long enough to know that certain people had a habit of making other people disappear pronto when the other people stopped doling out bucks, too.

Jack Malone was working on a hunch, and reckoned he knew what the score was with the Fairweather broad’s husband even before she started to explain. I decided not to waste any time:

A shocking footer appeared in the Portuguese news,

“So, Mrs Fairweather, were your husband and you having any, uh, financial problems, let’s say?" was my first question.

TVI’s channel, on April 14th:

“Population of North of Portugal less educated, poorer, aged and living in nursing homes”, followed by images of Porto.

“Why, yes, as a matter of fact we were,” she said, surprised and embarrassed, “but last month my husband told me he had secured a loan from a gentleman who has a club near here.

Jimmy’s Joint.

We seemed to be fine for a while, and then Norman - that's my husband - was nervous for days on end, and three days ago I came home and there he was - gone.”

Porto is the North, but the North is not just Porto…

I knowed it, I just knowed it ...

These were the reasons claimed for the high number of cases and deaths in the “Invicta” city, the most punished with Covid-19 in Portugal.

“You don’t mean Jimmy the Weasel, do you, Doris?”

(By now, the country shows almost 19,000 confirmed cases, and more than 600 fatalities.)

“I suppose so.

It was Jimmy something. So you know him?”

The channel already apologized for this unfortunate footer on the screen after the reactions of social media and Rui Moreira, the President of Porto City Council.

I didn't know Jimmy the Weasel so intimately, but I did know it was a lousy idea to take a loan off him.

People that couldn’t pay it back didn’t stay people too long.

However, words were said, and pains were felt.

“And why do they call him Jimmy the Weasel?" asked Doris.

The fight against coronavirus must be national and transversal, and on a global scale, but instead of it, TVI found interesting to spread this “virulent” news.

(I always learned the press should provide a service of exemption and objectivity…

“Because he looks like one.

Because he has one.

Because he breeds them.

I’ve no idea, lady.

But you sure as hell don’t get to be called Jimmy the Weasel because you’re a swell guy, a gentleman like you said.

Listen, Doris, I’m real sorry and all, but I’m dollar sure I know what the take is with your old man.

Jimmy the Weasel’s taken him for a ride.”

I am so naïve!)

“A ride?”

With this news, the population was hurt, “cataloged” and with a feeling of not belonging to Portugal.

“That’s what I said, ma’am, a ride.

But a ride with a one-way ticket."

The fact is that Porto has been very active and helpful during this pandemic, and in self-isolation:

“One-way ticket?"

Movement “North in Action”, disinfectant gel produced by Santo António Hospital, and others, creation of medical caravans, and many voluntary companies are contributing with medical equipment/items, etc. with the leadership of Rui Moreira.

“Sure, a one-way ticket, lady.

You gotta understand he’s been iced.”

The North is made of educated, humble, friendly, and hospitable people, and the South knows us very well.

I hope this will not happen again, because I am a “tripeira” (native of Porto) who loves her country, from one end of the continent to the other, Islands included!

“Iced?”

I couldn't imagine I would watch and read this news in such difficult times like these.

“You bet, doll.

With a heater.”

We need to be united, and contained in this emergency and difficult time, without creating divisions and disharmony between North and South regions.

“Heater?”

Creepy, but

“Say, what gives, is there an echo in here?

Lingua 5B wrote:

You got it, a heater.

Like the Spaghettis say, he a-sleeps widda da fishes.

He’ll never show.”

I went to a hospital for a medical interpreting assignment.

A very tall building indeed and I hate elevators (hate is an understatement).

“Mr Malone, please talk sense. How can anyone use a heater to ice anything?

So I walk in and check on numerous elevators, preferably with other people inside so I am not left all alone inside in case it gets stuck somewhere in between the two floors.

So I enter a rather smallish elevator with two other people inside, one person pressing the buttons asking us all what button to press for us.

I say "floor 12, please".

It defies logic.

And what is this nonsense about sleeping with fish?”

As we move upwards, he says to me "Ma'm, I can't see number 12, I pressed 14 for you, so you may just walk two floors downs using the stairs".

I say "Fine, thanks, no problem".

I heaved a sigh, took it real slow, and explained.

I gotta tell you, she didn’t seem too upset about my little theory.

She just sniffed a little into a real pretty lace handkerchief, was all.

By the time she looked up, her mind was on the ball again.

The elevators stops.

I can't wait for the door to open just to pop out. So I do and I am relieved.

I walk around trying to find the exit with staircase in order to go down and reach my destination floor - floor #12.

“You see, Mr Malone, in that case, I can’t collect on the insurance if there's no body.

Norman had a policy for fifty thousand dollars.

And if they never find him, like you said … unless somebody could talk to Jimmy the Weasel as to his, er, whereabouts … and the three of us could come to some, shall we say, monetary arrangement … ?”

However, I walk around in circles and can't seem to find the exit, then I eventually find one, but the staircase looks like a maze.

She was a quick thinker, the Fairweather.

The little grief I’d seen had been replaced by greed with a capital $. Norman wasn’t her late husband no more, he was fifty big ones.

And I was being cut in on the act, too.

It was a little ways out of the gray area of principles, because sure, Jack Malone has his principles, but he has bills to pay also, and those greenbacks don’t grow on trees.

I decide to walk around the floor 14 in order to ask for help and as I walk around things start getting a little suspicious.

I can see epidemiologists in white overalls (now this is a literal overall with white pillow case over their head and black welding glasses), I see a lot of buzz, I see spit and blood on the floor, drama everywhere.

I start getting even more suspicious slowly stepping into a panic mode.

I start running down toward the maze-like staircase, where somewhere in the middle of the route down towards the floor 12 (not reached yet) I meet an acquaintance and tell her about what I saw on floor 14 and that I assume it's the floor for Corona infected people only, she answers "Yes, it is".

“Tell you what I’ll do, lady.

It’s a long shot, but it just might work.”

I'm glad it was just a nightmare.

Gotta admit I always get a real kick out of saying that one.

Well

“I can’t promise you nuthin’”, I went on, “but I'll go talk to Jimmy the Weasel and see first if I’m right, and second if there's anything we can do about it.”

expressisverbis wrote:

So that evening I moseyed down to Jimmy the Weasel’s speakeasy four or five blocks away.

They call them speakeasies because it’s a swell idea to speak easy and watch your dad-blamed mouth with the wise guys if you don’t want to find yourself trying on some cement boots for size.

Jimmy’s Joint was jumping when I walked in.

Jimmy's Joint.

The joint with the most wise guys per square meter in the whole neighborhood.

They were all standing around in their flashy suits and hats, knocking back the laughter juice, slapping backs, brushing little specks of dust off their lapels, jabbing at some other guy’s ribs, yapping “Hey muddafugga, you crazy?", "Get da fuggoudda heah", like the wise guys do.

A shocking footer appeared in the Portuguese news, TVI’s channel, on April 14th: “Population of North of Portugal less educated, poorer, aged and living in nursing homes”, followed by images of Porto.

At the middle of it all on a sofa I could see Mr Wise Guy himself.

Jimmy the Weasel.

Jimmy ran the whole range of outfits, what he called business and what the DA called ill-gotten gains but couldn't prove spit, mostly thru dance halls and clubs.

A little fat guy.

Kind of comical-looking, but understand there was nuthin’ funny about Jimmy the Weasel.

A truckload of guys had underestimated Jimmy that way. Guys that weren’t around no more.

If that happened in Germany, I guess the offender would be booted out faster than anyone could say

'Geflügelfleischuntersuchungsverordnungsinkrafttretenrevisionsverfahren'

(it passed the spellcheck).

Sitting across from Jimmy was his right-hand man, rumored to be a specialist in just that - guys that weren't around no more.

Leastways, he made real sure they didn’t reappear.

Ace Reilly was built like a bull.

Ace Reilly got plenty exercise.

He kept an assortment of shovels, picks and spades in the trunk of his automobile.

Ace could dig a shallow grave in under a half hour on a moment’s notice. Taller clients or dispatches upstate lengthened the timeline a tad, but that was what Ace did best.

He sure had an eerie way of looking at everyone Jimmy talked to as well, like he was measuring up just in case there would be a call-out later.

There will always be haughty idiots.

Don't let them get you down.

I had a wonderful holiday in the Porto area many years ago, in the 80s, enjoying the vinho verde and many other things.

But many locals were driving like maniacs.

Do they still do that?

Moll was there too.

Whether that was a name or a profession, people didn’t like to ask.

As usual, she was covered in bling from head to toe - rings, necklaces, brooches, and even a tiara.

That night she was smothered in furs too.

A minx in minks.

The long kiss goodnight.

What a pack, I thought as I approached.

Pack was the right word, too.

What with the King of Clubs, the Queen of Diamonds, the Ace of Spades, and Jack, I figured we were only short a ten for a neat-looking hand in five-card stud.

Hey Merv, your cool story reminded me of a book by Ray Chandler, titled above.

It's about a middle aged writer who dissapears to go on a booze binge.

Moll looked up.

When detective Marlow catches up with him, an encounter between the writer and the written takes place.

“Mr Malone.

How nice to see you. Do you like my new wrap?"

"I know you think there is something inside of me trying to get out Marlow, but your wrong.

I did a take on the dead animal hanging around her neck.

There is nothing nothing nothing".

The wisdom of ages. Expressive verbs talked about a subject very dear to me, that is snobbery, and a north south divide.

Here in the north of England we suffer from decades of under funding, due to the aggressive snobery of the south, who are apparently surprised that we can read.

Our response to this is simple, f\*#k 'em.

Although this response is not to everyone taste I understand that, I'm just saying it works for me.

3 more weeks of containement and then it's over.

My under funded little ass can get on with it, just gonna booze binge my way through the next 3 weeks.

“Fine duds for sure."

I turned to Jimmy.

“Must come pretty expensive, huh Jimmy?"

No, I do not feel resentful, or sad :)

Jimmy nodded.

“Cost me two hundred bucks.

It’s a stole.”

Yes, they still do that, but now… no more, roads are almost empty, and desert.

“More like a steal”, I said.

When all this is over, I'm sure drivers will drive safer, and I hope you can visit us again, in the company of the "vinho verde" and friendly people.

I was just unpleasantly surprised with the news.

“Haven’t seen ya on the patch lately, Malone,” said Jimmy.

“We was just talkin' 'bout ya.”

Local time: 22:49

“Were, Jimmy”, said Moll.

Friday 17 April - Cookery Friday

“Where?

Apr 17

Why, right here with you and Ace, honey-bunch,” said Jimmy.

“Broads”, he guffawed.

“Can't live with them, can't live without them, huh Jack?"

554 dead yesterday nationwide, as against 523 the day before.

And the headline isn’t much better:

“I’ve heard it said,” I agreed.

“Six people die every day in senior citizens’ homes”.

Moll rolled her eyes.

Jimmy the Weasel wasn’t no grammarian, he was a mobster.

You can take the man out of Hell’s Kitchen, but you can't take Hell’s Kitchen out of the man.

He was watching me carefully with his little piggy eyes.

Not that I had ever gotten in Jimmy’s way because I preferred to go on breathing, and, like I said, he was smart enough to never get his hands dirty himself, but he knew what Jack Malone did for a living, and he wasn’t taking no chances.

I think that one’s just the Basque Country, though.

Thank God it’s Friday.

“So what’s with ya, Jack?

And Friday means Cookery Day again.

Today it’s Fish Soup, but keep it under your hat, don’t let the Basques know.

Ya welcome just so long as ya not here in an official capacity.”

They reckon they invented fish.

Especially cod.

Not for nothing do they have the expression “he/she who cuts the cod”, meaning the Person in Charge of Things Around Here, and if they find out you’re even contemplating doing fish, they’ll be in like Flynn with a barrage of questions, what kind of fish, where did you buy it, going to roast it or fry it or do it in a sauce, oh yes, what sauce is that, what’s in it, oh no, you can’t do that, no no, my gran used to say that you should always …

“Well, yes and no, Jimmy.

Let's just say I've got a business proposition …”

See?

There ain’t much more to tell.

It all went smoothly in Jimmy’s office.

While he didn’t actually admit to anything, when I mentioned the name Norman Fairweather I could see he was wise to it.

Said he’d get Ace on the job, see if he could “find” the body for the poor dame.

I thought to myself it would put a little variety into Ace's work, since he was more used to putting folks to bed than waking them up, but I wasn’t about to say so.

That wasn’t my concern.

I was just the middleman.

The stiff was produced, Doris was paid, so was Jimmy, and so was I.

Jimmy went back to racketeering, Doris went back to Noo Joizee, and I went back to being a downmarket private eye waging an uneven battle as a hapless anti-hero underdog amid the upper échelons of organized crime, a rough diamond with a heart, striving to make sense of life, love and loneliness in an itty bitty gritty world of mindless violence.

But I could never make sense of any of it, so I just went back to the bottle to try to forget that dame I kept remembering to remember and forget all at the same time.

Not worth it.

Like you give two buggers what granny said or did.

Today it’s a hands-on effort too, because I was at the fishmonger stall in the market early this morning to test-drive it first, because it’s been a while.

There are three stages: the sauce stage, the stock stage and the fish ‘n’ seafood stage.

All I’ve had time for so far is parts one and two, because I’ve got 8K to do later, so only the easy bit to go a little later on today.

Broads.

Can’t live with them, can't live without them.

Ingredients for about 4:

Thursday 16 April

One largish onion

Apr 16

One largish green pepper

523 deaths in Spain yesterday.

Might be more.

Or fewer, you wouldn’t know.

All sorts of tangential debates are kicking in on death statistics: was it a coronavirus death pure and simple, was it a coronavirus death with no previous symptoms, was it a coronavirus death simply exacerbated by previous conditions, was it a coronavirus death at home not registered at the hospital, was it a coronavirus death …?

Two or three cloves of garlic

I’m beginning to lose faith in the experts because, as I said recently, there seem to be hordes of them coming out of the woodwork now expounding knowledgeably by video with their bookcases behind them, but one Spanish epidemiology expert was reporting from California last night and I have to agree with him in that the debate is not whether it’s XXX deaths or XXX give or take a few, but that it’s high enough to be doing something about it instead of everyone pissing around.

Two red chilli pepper seeds

I repeat, I’m not a socialist, far from it, but I have nothing but contempt for all these smarmy overpaid oafs stirring the shit with the PM now, the same smarmy overpaid oafs who were incapable of reaching an agreement to even form a government for the best part of two or three years, droning on and on about the tragedy of redundancies and a police state when they certainly don’t even have to give a second thought to their own redundancies or the police state because, apparently, shit-stirring is vital for the good of the Spanish people the oafs claim to represent.

Although maybe it’s inevitable.

In a previous era, at least they were behind the likes of Churchill in a tricky corner, and had the decency to let him get on with it, and wait a few years until they booted him out of office.

But I'll remember those smarmy overpaid oafs when they ask for my vote down the line in the name of solidarity and the people.

Ten plum tomatoes

Talking of Churchill, as you may have observed, I'm definitely seeing his "black dog" these days.

Three or four wedges of cheap white fish, salted and roughly quartered (you don’t put bream or cod or hake in this, but I bought angler fish this morning, in wedges, prepared with the bones and skin aside, because I like angler fish and I’m doing the bloody thing, aren’t I?)

Diary April 16

A dozen clams A dozen pre-cooked langostino prawns

I went to a hospital for a medical interpreting assignment.

A very tall building indeed and I hate elevators (hate is an understatement).

So I walk in and check on numerous elevators, preferably with other people inside so I am not left all alone inside in case it gets stuck somewhere in between the two floors.

So I enter a rather smallish elevator with two other people inside, one person pressing the buttons asking us all what button to press for us.

I say "floor 12, please". As we move upwards, he says to me "Ma'm, I can't see number 12, I pressed 14 for you, so you may just walk two floors downs using the stairs".

I say "Fine, thanks, no problem".

The elevators stops.

I can't wait for the door to open just to pop out.

So I do and I am relieved.

I walk around trying to find the exit with staircase in order to go down and reach my destination floor - floor #12.

However, I walk around in circles and can't seem to find the exit, then I eventually find one, but the staircase looks like a maze.

I decide to walk around the floor 14 in order to ask for help and as I walk around things start getting a little suspicious.

I can see epidemiologists in white overalls (now this is a literal overall with white pillow case over their head and black welding glasses), I see a lot of buzz, I see spit and blood on the floor, drama everywhere.

I start getting even more suspicious slowly stepping into a panic mode.

I start running down toward the maze-like staircase, where somewhere in the middle of the route down towards the floor 12 (not reached yet) I meet an acquaintance and tell her about what I saw on floor 14 and that I assume it's the floor for Corona infected people only, she answers "Yes, it is".

A bottle of chilled white wine (not the cooking stuff, the real McCoy)

Can't remember what happened next.

I did not wake up in sweats as the night was rather chilly.

I just woke up.

The Secret Ingredient (fish cube this time)

Nightmare

Parsley if you want to put some in or on at the end (the fishmonger always offers it, so might as well take it)

Well, I believed that one right up to the end, Lingua 5B!

SAUCE STAGE

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Chop the onion and the peppers and fry slowly in olive oil in a large fish casserole pan.

When they’re soft, add in the chopped tomatoes and add a bit of sugar to counter the acidic taste.

There isn’t much else to that, so you can just let it reduce on a medium heat for half an hour or so and stir occasionally, and meanwhile you can get on with the ...

Local time: 21:49

STOCK STAGE

A different diary ("TV journal")

Top and tail and peel the prawns, but DON’T throw away the tops and tails etc. because you’ll be needing them in a few minutes.

Put the peeled prawns away with the fish chunks and the clams, for part three.

Put the stock cube into a pan of about an inch of water, along with the fish bones and skin.

While it’s heating, put the remains of the prawns in a pan with some oil and the chillis, and fry them, crushing their little heads and tails and the chillis with a wooden spoon to get all that fishy spicy gunk out.

When they’ve changed colour after about five minutes, throw the water and stock and fish bones etc. in the frying pan, and let it all simmer for five minutes.

Strain it, and there’s your stock.

A shocking footer appeared in the Portuguese news,

Add the stock to the sauce, let it all cook for a bit more, and then put it in the blender.

There’s your fishy spicy orangey sauce.

It should be thickish, it all depends on how much stock you put in, but really it doesn’t matter, because after all it’s a soup, innit?

TVI’s channel, on April 14th:

“Population of North of Portugal less educated, poorer, aged and living in nursing homes”, followed by images of Porto.

FISH ‘N’ SEAFOOD STAGE

Porto is the North, but the North is not just Porto…

(only half an hour before serving) Put the clams, peeled prawns and bits of fish in a pan with chopped garlic and chopped parsley, and fry the lot gently until the clams open. Pour the lot into the sauce, including all the clammy liquid, and Bob’s your uncle.

These were the reasons claimed for the high number of cases and deaths in the “Invicta” city, the most punished with Covid-19 in Portugal.

Pour out a large glass of wine.

Sip it slowly.

No, it was never going in there with the rest.

If you’ve timed it right, when you’ve finished that glass it’ll be time to add all that stuff in.

(By now, the country shows almost 19,000 confirmed cases, and more than 600 fatalities.)

That’s it. I might have missed out on a few of the finer details, but got to get back to work.

Got to buy some white wine at some point for stage three as well.

The channel already apologized for this unfortunate footer on the screen after the reactions of social media and Rui Moreira, the President of Porto City Council.

Italy even worse

However, words were said, and pains were felt.

554 dead yesterday nationwide, as against 523 the day before.

And the headline isn’t much better:

“Six people die every day in senior citizens’ homes”.

I think that one’s just the Basque Country, though.

Thank God it’s Friday.

The fight against coronavirus must be national and transversal, and on a global scale, but instead of it, TVI found interesting to spread this “virulent” news.

(I always learned the press should provide a service of exemption and objectivity…

Hi Mervyn, like I said at page 1, I am resident in Spain now blocked in Italy since Feb 28, (I am Italian citizen)

I am so naïve!)

yesterday after 40 days of "confinamiento" of the whole country and 50 since the confinamiento of my province (not Milan) but still almost 600 dead nation wide, situation is still worrying, they want to open May 4th, but... the "curva" does not decrease... and (in percentage) Italy has the highest number of deaths and the lowest number of recovered.

It is a real mess here and on top of that I do not know when I will see my dear home in Spain close to the beach, (Comunidad Valenciana).

Worried and sad here.

With this news, the population was hurt, “cataloged” and with a feeling of not belonging to Portugal.

Situation in Lombardy/nursing homes

The fact is that Porto has been very active and helpful during this pandemic, and in self-isolation:

I'd say the situation in 16 of Italy's 20 regions is probably less severe than elsewhere.

The real problems have arisen around the original cluster in the North, which to be fair has been very successfully contained to date.

Movement “North in Action”, disinfectant gel produced by Santo António Hospital, and others, creation of medical caravans, and many voluntary companies are contributing with medical equipment/items, etc. with the leadership of Rui Moreira.

Basically pretty much all headline statistics (new cases, deaths, recovered) in all countries are very approximate.

The crucial statistic is pressure on ICUs in terms of admissions.

Some experts here in Italy are suggesting the number of deaths is at least double the official number in Lombardy and up to seven times the official number in other regions.

The usual indication used to measure the effect of epidemics is deaths over the usual number of deaths for a given period in official records and this will be the best indicator of the damage done once the dust has settled in Europe.

The North is made of educated, humble, friendly, and hospitable people, and the South knows us very well.

I hope this will not happen again, because I am a “tripeira” (native of Porto) who loves her country, from one end of the continent to the other, Islands included!

The situation in nursing homes is dire in most countries.

I expect the total number of deaths in RSAs in Lombardy will run into the thousands.

I live in a small town in the Alps (pop. 12,500) and there have been 30 deaths in the first 10 days of this month alone in our RSA, most suspected cases of Covid19.

I expect that in most European countries the number of deaths in nursing homes will probably be equal to the number of hospital deaths.

The vast majority of homes are unable to deal with critical cases or even to properly contain spread of the disease to staff and other residents.

I couldn't imagine I would watch and read this news in such difficult times like these.

I've seen other comments about the low number of recorded recoveries in Italy, but this number will settle at a similar number in most developed countries.

Testing tends to be done more where the outbreak is less severe, since where it hits hardest, resources tend to shift away from testing and towards emergency services.

Since it takes at least two negative tests to establish a recovery, you can see how the recovery figure would lag behind the positives figure in the cluster areas.

The vast number of people that I know who can safely be assumed to have been been infected (for example, family members of medical staff testing positive) and who have recovered or died have not been tested due to the pressure on services.

We need to be united, and contained in this emergency and difficult time, without creating divisions and disharmony between North and South regions.

Angie,

Creepy, but

Countries will start to lift restrictions gradually and in a controlled way, Italy included.

Lingua 5B wrote:

Some regions in the north of Italy will maintain their measures for longer, according to what I read in the news.

I went to a hospital for a medical interpreting assignment.

A very tall building indeed and I hate elevators (hate is an understatement).

https://www.thelocal.it/20200416/a-summer-without-travel-how-long-will-italys-coronavirus-lockdown-last

So I walk in and check on numerous elevators, preferably with other people inside so I am not left all alone inside in case it gets stuck somewhere in between the two floors.

So I enter a rather smallish elevator with two other people inside, one person pressing the buttons asking us all what button to press for us.

I say "floor 12, please".

As we move upwards, he says to me "Ma'm, I can't see number 12, I pressed 14 for you, so you may just walk two floors downs using the stairs".

I say "Fine, thanks, no problem".

I also agree it's too early for allowing reopenings, but I believe we will be complying with the rules enforced before.

The elevators stops.

I can't wait for the door to open just to pop out. So I do and I am relieved.

I walk around trying to find the exit with staircase in order to go down and reach my destination floor - floor #12.

Don't be sad, please!

However, I walk around in circles and can't seem to find the exit, then I eventually find one, but the staircase looks like a maze.

We will get back to normal, it's only a matter of time, and soon you will be in your sweet home in Spain!

I decide to walk around the floor 14 in order to ask for help and as I walk around things start getting a little suspicious.

I can see epidemiologists in white overalls (now this is a literal overall with white pillow case over their head and black welding glasses), I see a lot of buzz, I see spit and blood on the floor, drama everywhere.

I start getting even more suspicious slowly stepping into a panic mode.

I start running down toward the maze-like staircase, where somewhere in the middle of the route down towards the floor 12 (not reached yet) I meet an acquaintance and tell her about what I saw on floor 14 and that I assume it's the floor for Corona infected people only, she answers "Yes, it is".

(Lucky you!

A sea view I have mountains, a very green landscape).

Cheer up!

I'm glad it was just a nightmare.

Well

. Apr 17

expressisverbis wrote:

Worried and sad here.

A shocking footer appeared in the Portuguese news, TVI’s channel, on April 14th: “Population of North of Portugal less educated, poorer, aged and living in nursing homes”, followed by images of Porto.

Just a big virtual hug to commiserate with you (from France where things are not much better).

If that happened in Germany, I guess the offender would be booted out faster than anyone could say

'Geflügelfleischuntersuchungsverordnungsinkrafttretenrevisionsverfahren' (it passed the spellcheck).

Regions in the north want to open they are discussing just now

There will always be haughty idiots.

Don't let them get you down. I had a wonderful holiday in the Porto area many years ago, in the 80s, enjoying the vinho verde and many other things.

But many locals were driving like maniacs. Do they still do that?

A sea view I have mountains, a very green landscape).

Cheer up!

The long kiss goodnight.

Thank for your empathy, really, I am listening right now, that the 3 more affected regions in North (I am now in one of them) want to open mar 4th, I understand that it is time to open but with 600 dead every day and an increase of 1000 infected (every day just in the Northern regions), is worrying.

Hey Merv, your cool story reminded me of a book by Ray Chandler, titled above. It's about a middle aged writer who dissapears to go on a booze binge.

But yes they will open, and we will have to live with that monster.

When detective Marlow catches up with him, an encounter between the writer and the written takes place.

A virtual hug back

"I know you think there is something inside of me trying to get out Marlow, but your wrong.

Kay Denney wrote:

There is nothing nothing nothing".

The wisdom of ages.

Expressive verbs talked about a subject very dear to me, that is snobbery, and a north south divide.

Here in the north of England we suffer from decades of under funding, due to the aggressive snobery of the south, who are apparently surprised that we can read.

Our response to this is simple, f\*#k 'em.

Although this response is not to everyone taste I understand that, I'm just saying it works for me.

3 more weeks of containement and then it's over.

My under funded little ass can get on with it, just gonna booze binge my way through the next 3 weeks.

Thank you Kay.

No, I do not feel resentful, or sad :)

Yes, they still do that, but now… no more, roads are almost empty, and desert.

A hug back to you, I know France is suffering, I have also relatives there (my mother was French).

When all this is over, I'm sure drivers will drive safer, and I hope you can visit us again, in the company of the "vinho verde" and friendly people.

I was just unpleasantly surprised with the news.

France is my second country along with Spain

I know it's not easy, Angie

Local time: 22:49

Friday 17 April - Cookery Friday

While Portugal is being a little spared, we are living here with fear… and since one of my sisters was infected about two weeks ago, our concerns are bigger.

Apr 17

In these times I really don't know the right words to ease our pains.

We just need to be patient

(It's easy to say… and I am not patient at all).

554 dead yesterday nationwide, as against 523 the day before.

And the headline isn’t much better:

We are going to live with this "monster", but not for long!

My virtual hugs to you, and everyone!

“Six people die every day in senior citizens’ homes”.

I think that one’s just the Basque Country, though. Thank God it’s Friday.

PS: I just find a bit strange no interaction of any Portuguese members.

Maybe I am the type of person who worries a lot.

And Friday means Cookery Day again.

Today it’s Fish Soup, but keep it under your hat, don’t let the Basques know.

Fish soup update

They reckon they invented fish.

Especially cod.

Not for nothing do they have the expression “he/she who cuts the cod”, meaning the Person in Charge of Things Around Here, and if they find out you’re even contemplating doing fish, they’ll be in like Flynn with a barrage of questions, what kind of fish, where did you buy it, going to roast it or fry it or do it in a sauce, oh yes, what sauce is that, what’s in it, oh no, you can’t do that, no no, my gran used to say that you should always …

Sorry, but I just had to bang my own drum.

See?

The Basques, who naturally had not been given any prior fish warning, were so pleasantly surprised with the result that granny and her battered old pots and pans and log-fired stove weren't even mentioned.

Not worth it. Like you give two buggers what granny said or did.

Today it’s a hands-on effort too, because I was at the fishmonger stall in the market early this morning to test-drive it first, because it’s been a while.

There are three stages: the sauce stage, the stock stage and the fish ‘n’ seafood stage.

All I’ve had time for so far is parts one and two, because I’ve got 8K to do later, so only the easy bit to go a little later on today.

Not even a half-raised eyebrow with the spiciness of it (I really went to town on the chilli-squashing).

Ingredients for about 4:

And thank God I decided at the last minute not to put in the angler fish, and keep it for cooking in garlic tomorrow, otherwise there might well have been some humming and hawing and tut-tutting for using top-quality fish in a soup.

One largish onion

It's the little victories that count.

One largish green pepper

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Two or three cloves of garlic

Stayin' Inside

Two red chilli pepper seeds

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Ten plum tomatoes

https://inisolationtogether.artcoreuk.com/artists-group2/

Three or four wedges of cheap white fish, salted and roughly quartered (you don’t put bream or cod or hake in this, but I bought angler fish this morning, in wedges, prepared with the bones and skin aside, because I like angler fish and I’m doing the bloody thing, aren’t I?)

Local time: 17:45

A dozen clams A dozen pre-cooked langostino prawns

Cursor

A bottle of chilled white wine (not the cooking stuff, the real McCoy)

Apr 18

The Secret Ingredient (fish cube this time)

Thanks, Brian. I'm sure the site might be interesting if you could actually browse around it.

Parsley if you want to put some in or on at the end (the fishmonger always offers it, so might as well take it)

Somebody should suggest that they focus on user-friendliness instead of user-irritatingness.

SAUCE STAGE

Or maybe it's an art thing, and that's why I don't get it.

Chop the onion and the peppers and fry slowly in olive oil in a large fish casserole pan.

When they’re soft, add in the chopped tomatoes and add a bit of sugar to counter the acidic taste.

There isn’t much else to that, so you can just let it reduce on a medium heat for half an hour or so and stir occasionally, and meanwhile you can get on with the ...

Thinking outside the box, round the box, up and down the box and all over the box with a circle cursor that just won't cooperate.

STOCK STAGE

Yes, the more I think about it, the more I reckon there must be an existentialist message in there somewhere, conveying the meaninglessness and pointlessness and fruitlessness and everythinglessness of life.

Top and tail and peel the prawns, but DON’T throw away the tops and tails etc. because you’ll be needing them in a few minutes.

Put the peeled prawns away with the fish chunks and the clams, for part three. Put the stock cube into a pan of about an inch of water, along with the fish bones and skin.

While it’s heating, put the remains of the prawns in a pan with some oil and the chillis, and fry them, crushing their little heads and tails and the chillis with a wooden spoon to get all that fishy spicy gunk out.

When they’ve changed colour after about five minutes, throw the water and stock and fish bones etc. in the frying pan, and let it all simmer for five minutes.

Strain it, and there’s your stock.

Quarantine fish soup

Add the stock to the sauce, let it all cook for a bit more, and then put it in the blender.

There’s your fishy spicy orangey sauce.

It should be thickish, it all depends on how much stock you put in, but really it doesn’t matter, because after all it’s a soup, innit?

Thank you, Mervyn, for this recipe (very tempting), but also rather complicated for quarantined persons that don't live in walking distance from the sea or fishmongers with a good assortment, which is my case.

FISH ‘N’ SEAFOOD STAGE

Therefore I prepared another tortilla, this time with bacon.

(only half an hour before serving)

Put the clams, peeled prawns and bits of fish in a pan with chopped garlic and chopped parsley, and fry the lot gently until the clams open.

Pour the lot into the sauce, including all the clammy liquid, and Bob’s your uncle.

But I must say it was much better without...

Pour out a large glass of wine. Sip it slowly. No, it was never going in there with the rest. If you’ve timed it right, when you’ve finished that glass it’ll be time to add all that stuff in.

Coming back to Corona, it is difficult to understand why the mortality rate (I think it is called like that, I mean deaths per million) is so high for example especially in Lombardy (Italy), Madrid or NY, while Germany in a whole seems to get off for the moment rather cheaply, fortunately (don't get me wrong, I believe each dead is too much), and Portugal, so close to Spain, where the late Luis Sepúlveda has been infected, has relatively low numbers.

Belgium, instead, has AFAIK one of the highest mortality rates worldwide (to say nothing of San Marino), much higher than in Spain.

It's a puzzle for me!

That’s it. I might have missed out on a few of the finer details, but got to get back to work.

Got to buy some white wine at some point for stage three as well.

Local time: 16:45

Italy even worse

More time to prepare ourselves

554 dead yesterday nationwide, as against 523 the day before.

And the headline isn’t much better:

“Six people die every day in senior citizens’ homes”.

I think that one’s just the Basque Country, though.

Thank God it’s Friday.

Therefore I prepared another tortilla, this time with bacon. But I must say it was much better without...

Hi Mervyn, like I said at page 1, I am resident in Spain now blocked in Italy since Feb 28, (I am Italian citizen)

Coming back to Corona, it is difficult to understand why the mortality rate (I think it is called like that, I mean deaths per million) is so high for example especially in Lombardy (Italy), Madrid or NY, while Germany in a whole seems to get off for the moment rather cheaply, fortunately

(don't get me wrong, I believe each dead is too much),

and Portugal, so close to Spain, where the late Luis Sepúlveda has been infected, has relatively low numbers.

Belgium, instead, has AFAIK one of the highest mortality rates worldwide (to say nothing of San Marino), much higher than in Spain.

yesterday after 40 days of "confinamiento" of the whole country and 50 since the confinamiento of my province (not Milan) but still almost 600 dead nation wide, situation is still worrying, they want to open May 4th, but... the "curva" does not decrease... and (in percentage) Italy has the highest number of deaths and the lowest number of recovered.

It is a real mess here and on top of that I do not know when I will see my dear home in Spain close to the beach, (Comunidad Valenciana).

Worried and sad here.

It's a puzzle for me!

Situation in Lombardy/nursing homes

More preparation time has helped Portugal manage its coronavirus outbreak, and strict measures were taken.

I'd say the situation in 16 of Italy's 20 regions is probably less severe than elsewhere.

The real problems have arisen around the original cluster in the North, which to be fair has been very successfully contained to date.

From one day to another, services, schools, universities, shops, companies, bars, restaurants, etc. closed.

Basically pretty much all headline statistics (new cases, deaths, recovered) in all countries are very approximate.

The crucial statistic is pressure on ICUs in terms of admissions.

Some experts here in Italy are suggesting the number of deaths is at least double the official number in Lombardy and up to seven times the official number in other regions.

The usual indication used to measure the effect of epidemics is deaths over the usual number of deaths for a given period in official records and this will be the best indicator of the damage done once the dust has settled in Europe.

Also, people are obeying confinement measures, with some exceptions.

The situation in nursing homes is dire in most countries.

I expect the total number of deaths in RSAs in Lombardy will run into the thousands.

I live in a small town in the Alps (pop. 12,500) and there have been 30 deaths in the first 10 days of this month alone in our RSA, most suspected cases of Covid19.

I expect that in most European countries the number of deaths in nursing homes will probably be equal to the number of hospital deaths.

The vast majority of homes are unable to deal with critical cases or even to properly contain spread of the disease to staff and other residents.

The country geographical conditions can be the main reason for Portugal not been as badly hit by COVID-19 as our neighbor Spain.

I've seen other comments about the low number of recorded recoveries in Italy, but this number will settle at a similar number in most developed countries.

Testing tends to be done more where the outbreak is less severe, since where it hits hardest, resources tend to shift away from testing and towards emergency services.

Since it takes at least two negative tests to establish a recovery, you can see how the recovery figure would lag behind the positives figure in the cluster areas.

The vast number of people that I know who can safely be assumed to have been been infected (for example, family members of medical staff testing positive) and who have recovered or died have not been tested due to the pressure on services.

I wish deaths and infections start to slow down soon in the most punished countries.

Angie,

Press and health authorities say they are…

Countries will start to lift restrictions gradually and in a controlled way, Italy included.

It's heart-breaking.

Some regions in the north of Italy will maintain their measures for longer, according to what I read in the news.

Sunday 19 April

https://www.thelocal.it/20200416/a-summer-without-travel-how-long-will-italys-coronavirus-lockdown-last

Apr 19

I also agree it's too early for allowing reopenings, but I believe we will be complying with the rules enforced before.

Deaths up a little again, and also up the day before, so we seem to be hovering between 500 and 600 a day for the duration.

Don't be sad, please!

Usually on a Saturday we have the news at 9, and then a weekly round-up in Informe Semanal, but last night the wretched Sánchez was wheeled out again live from the official PM’s residence, Moncloa, for some pre-news news at a press conference.

We will get back to normal, it's only a matter of time, and soon you will be in your sweet home in Spain!

He gave a speech – “ … positive figures … grim times ahead … severe lockdown conditions for Spaniards and Spaniardesses … we shall not falter … our health service heroes and heroines … light at the end of the tunnel … researchers and researcheresses working hard to find a vaccine … we shall prevail … solid hands-on administration by our doctors and doctoresses … help is on the way for our brave functionaries and functionariesses …” (yes, he does speak like that), and he fielded Tough Questions afterwards.

(Lucky you!

A question, as usual, broken down into two or three subquestions, would just about have fitted on a page of double-spaced A4, but the questions were as nothing compared to the answers.

A sea view I have mountains, a very green landscape). Cheer up!

By the time a question had been asked and he had answered it, I realised a quarter of an hour had gone by and I had forgotten what the question was, or even whether he had answered it.

But ignoring the question is politics, I suppose, and a lot of them are pretty good at that.

. Apr 17

All this ran into news time, which started with what is now Coronavirus News, plus the inevitable - and pointless - analysis of Pedro’s speech, plus reactions to Pedro’s speech, plus reactions to the reactions to Pedro’s speech, all equally pointless, an array of experts on things coronavirus, rather less pointless, and ending up with sports news, which included “coverage” of the Athletic Bilbao-Real Sociedad Copa del Rey derby final, which should have been played yesterday in Sevilla, but obviously couldn’t be, but there was footage of Athletic/Real Sociedad flags and shirts on the balconies yesterday at 8 pm (tribute to our brave players, and playeresses too in the female Athletic and Real Sociedad teams), and finally the weather

(the weather is the only slot that can’t mention coronavirus).

Worried and sad here.

Guess what the weekly Informe Semanal round-up was about?

Just a big virtual hug to commiserate with you (from France where things are not much better).

Except they focused on how bad they have it elsewhere – Ecuador, with the bodies being left out in the streets, and Nicaragua, where Mr Ortega has finally resurfaced after a month away from the cameras.

Regions in the north want to open they are discussing just now

Not dead, then.

Although he’d have had a nerve if he had died and had come back to say No problem, comrades.

A sea view I have mountains, a very green landscape).

He claimed there had been 1,500 deaths in the last month, and only 1 coronavirus death. S

Cheer up!

ome stuff!

Thank for your empathy, really, I am listening right now, that the 3 more affected regions in North (I am now in one of them) want to open mar 4th, I understand that it is time to open but with 600 dead every day and an increase of 1000 infected (every day just in the Northern regions), is worrying.

Naturally he can’t be lying because he’s the President, but let’s remember this is a country which pooh-poohed the problem from the start and positively encouraged social non-distancing?

But yes they will open, and we will have to live with that monster.

Somebody should be asking him how they do it, especially since it now seems the Chinese haven’t been completely up front about the whole thing and we don’t believe them just as much as we wanted to believe them before.

A virtual hug back

But we need their spare mask, respirator and glove supplies now, so best not to rock the boat.

Kay Denney wrote:

Ho-hum.

Thank you Kay.

Another 2K to finish.

A hug back to you, I know France is suffering, I have also relatives there (my mother was French).

On the positive side, April’s not looking too bad workwise in the end.

France is my second country along with Spain

@Christel

I know it's not easy, Angie

Coming back to Corona, it is difficult to understand why the mortality rate (I think it is called like that, I mean deaths per million) is so high for example especially in Lombardy (Italy), Madrid or NY, while Germany in a whole seems to get off for the moment rather cheaply, fortunately (don't get me wrong, I believe each dead is too much), and Portugal, so close to Spain, where the late Luis Sepúlveda has been infected, has relatively low numbers. Belgium,

While Portugal is being a little spared, we are living here with fear… and since one of my sisters was infected about two weeks ago, our concerns are bigger.

instead, has AFAIK one of the highest mortality rates worldwide (to say nothing of San Marino), much higher than in Spain. It's a puzzle for me!

In these times I really don't know the right words to ease our pains. We just need to be patient (It's easy to say… and I am not patient at all).

You'll find lots of reasons for the "German phenomenon" in the international media and on the country's relatively low case fatality rate (number of deaths per confirmed infections) rather than the mortality rate (number of deaths per million inhabitants), but many of these articles are now a bit outdated due to the relative (only relative) normalising of the German figures.

We are going to live with this "monster", but not for long!

Really it's better to avoid questions such as why Belgium is "worse " than Germany because these sorts of discussions then often break down into ugly arguments based on nationality.

My virtual hugs to you, and everyone!

Belgium is probably the only country that is releasing "raw" unconfirmed figures that include untested suspected cases of Covid19 (for example the UK yesterday announced a total to date of 15K confirmed hospital deaths, but an estimate was mentioned of a possible 7.5K additional deaths in care homes, which would have been included in the Belgian data).

PS: I just find a bit strange no interaction of any Portuguese members.

Maybe it's more helpful, for example, to ask why Lombardy had such high fatality/mortality rates compared to most of the rest of Italy and the answer is that it was the first place in Europe to uncover a vast hidden cluster (the only comparable case would be the Madrid area).

Maybe I am the type of person who worries a lot.

There had been Covid19 cases in Italy before, but these were isolated and limited using testing, identification of "patient 0" and contact tracing as suggested by the WHO (as also happened in the Bavarian car plant case or in the case of the famous UK "super-spreader").

Fish soup update

The problem is that the WHO testing protocols limited testing to those who had been in contact with suspected sources of infection.

Sorry, but I just had to bang my own drum.

Fortunately thanks to the insistence of one woman working in an ICU in the Lodi area "non-compliant" testing was eventually started and the Lombardy cluster was uncovered.

The Basques, who naturally had not been given any prior fish warning, were so pleasantly surprised with the result that granny and her battered old pots and pans and log-fired stove weren't even mentioned.

She no doubt saved many thousands of lives.

Not even a half-raised eyebrow with the spiciness of it (I really went to town on the chilli-squashing).

But by this stage the virus had been circulating for weeks and thousands of people had been infected.

And thank God I decided at the last minute not to put in the angler fish, and keep it for cooking in garlic tomorrow, otherwise there might well have been some humming and hawing and tut-tutting for using top-quality fish in a soup.

Were there special conditions in south-east Lombardy that welcomed the virus?

It's the little victories that count.

Probably the answer lies in the fact that it's a densely populated, heavily industrialised and polluted lowlands area that is also the logistical hub for that part of Europe (Amazon is based there), almost identical to Wuhan in China, to which it is linked by two daily direct Alitalia flights.

page18.html

Because of the evident danger of the problem based on this initial cluster, Lombardy was partially closed down on 24 February and all of Italy was "fully" closed down on 9 March.

Stayin' Inside

This meant that the vast majority of regions that had relatively few cases had to adopt very strict measures at an early stage and this accounts for the relative limitation of the outbreak to the areas around the original clusters in the North and the relatively low mortality rates in much of the Peninsula.

Annotation 2020-04-17 180130

This success can be seen in the fact that in my part of Lombardy, to the north, near Switzerland, hospitals continued to function normally and the province was able to helicopter in moveable intensive care patients who could not be cared for in the provinces directly affected.

https://inisolationtogether.artcoreuk.com/artists-group2/

We are really only feeling the effects of the pandemic now, with the rest of Europe, despite the fact that Bergamo is only 50 km away.

Local time: 17:45

I think that one problem with the cases after Lombardy was that just as Italy had been looking for the "Chinese connection", the rest of Europe and the world started to look for the "Italian skiing holiday connection" instead of testing based on suspect symptoms (although I suspect Madrid was basically a re-run of Lombardy).

Cursor

I think the "Italian skiing holiday connection" will eventually be seen as flawed also because the skiing resort areas here never had major clusters.

Apr 18

The least affected provinces in Lombardy, certainly for the first month, were the three Alpine provinces where resorts are located.

Thanks, Brian. I'm sure the site might be interesting if you could actually browse around it.

Monday 20 April

Somebody should suggest that they focus on user-friendliness instead of user-irritatingness.

Apr 20

Or maybe it's an art thing, and that's why I don't get it.

"We'll speed up tax refunds and taxpayers will have more money".

Thinking outside the box, round the box, up and down the box and all over the box with a circle cursor that just won't cooperate.

It's a quote from the Bizkaia Provincial Council's Tax Secretary.

Yes, the more I think about it, the more I reckon there must be an existentialist message in there somewhere, conveying the meaninglessness and pointlessness and fruitlessness and everythinglessness of life.

Or Secretary of Taxation. Or Treasury Secretary.

Quarantine fish soup

Or whatever. I forget how I translated it last, because I do more than a few translations for the local government here.

Thank you, Mervyn, for this recipe (very tempting), but also rather complicated for quarantined persons that don't live in walking distance from the sea or fishmongers with a good assortment, which is my case.

Anything but Tax Deputy or Treasury Deputy. Deputy?

Therefore I prepared another tortilla, this time with bacon.

Jesus H.

But I must say it was much better without...

Since the Provincial Council (best I can do) is Diputación Provincial (got it, Diputación?

Coming back to Corona, it is difficult to understand why the mortality rate (I think it is called like that, I mean deaths per million) is so high for example especially in Lombardy (Italy), Madrid or NY, while Germany in a whole seems to get off for the moment rather cheaply, fortunately (don't get me wrong, I believe each dead is too much), and Portugal, so close to Spain, where the late Luis Sepúlveda has been infected, has relatively low numbers.

Belgium, instead, has AFAIK one of the highest mortality rates worldwide (to say nothing of San Marino), much higher than in Spain. It's a puzzle for me!

...), the Main Man is the Diputado General, which they have on their website as General Deputy.

Local time: 16:45

But then they have Deputy this and Deputy that and Deputy the other, Environment Deputy, Institutional Relations Deputy, Central Government Relations Deputy ...

More time to prepare ourselves

Not my translations, I assure you.

Therefore I prepared another tortilla, this time with bacon. But I must say it was much better without...

But you all know how difficult it is to translate all that stuff ...

Coming back to Corona, it is difficult to understand why the mortality rate (I think it is called like that, I mean deaths per million) is so high for example especially in Lombardy (Italy), Madrid or NY, while Germany in a whole seems to get off for the moment rather cheaply, fortunately (don't get me wrong, I believe each dead is too much), and Portugal, so close to Spain, where the late Luis Sepúlveda has been infected, has relatively low numbers. Belgium, instead, has AFAIK one of the highest mortality rates worldwide (to say nothing of San Marino), much higher than in Spain.

I've told them "Deputy" sounds crap.

It's a puzzle for me!

But they don't have the culture.

In fact, the very word "Deputy" brings any "Deputy" down a peg here.

More preparation time has helped Portugal manage its coronavirus outbreak, and strict measures were taken.

And it could be more than one peg.

From one day to another, services, schools, universities, shops, companies, bars, restaurants, etc. closed.

Does anyone out there remember the wonderful, but in this case rather poignant, Deputy Dawg?

Also, people are obeying confinement measures, with some exceptions.

Deputy Dawg was a dawg, FFS.

The country geographical conditions can be the main reason for Portugal not been as badly hit by COVID-19 as our neighbor Spain.

And they didn't even pronounce it Dep-yoo-tee, as I remember.

I wish deaths and infections start to slow down soon in the most punished countries.

It was "Deppity Dawg".

I even sent a Deputy Dawg video to the customer once.

Press and health authorities say they are…

Deputy?

It's heart-breaking.

WTF?

Sunday 19 April

Or Deputy in the sense of the assistant sheriff in all those Westerns.

Apr 19

Who always gets killed, too, early on, but afterwards Gary Cooper or someone blasts the bad guys to kingdom come before the gal swoons.

Deaths up a little again, and also up the day before, so we seem to be hovering between 500 and 600 a day for the duration.

But Gary, now he was the Sheriff.

Usually on a Saturday we have the news at 9, and then a weekly round-up in Informe Semanal, but last night the wretched Sánchez was wheeled out again live from the official PM’s residence, Moncloa, for some pre-news news at a press conference.

The Main Man.

He gave a speech – “ … positive figures … grim times ahead … severe lockdown conditions for Spaniards and Spaniardesses … we shall not falter … our health service heroes and heroines … light at the end of the tunnel … researchers and researcheresses working hard to find a vaccine … we shall prevail … solid hands-on administration by our doctors and doctoresses … help is on the way for our brave functionaries and functionariesses …” (yes, he does speak like that), and he fielded Tough Questions afterwards.

And Gary got the girl.

A question, as usual, broken down into two or three subquestions, would just about have fitted on a page of double-spaced A4, but the questions were as nothing compared to the answers.

He got all the best lines, too:

By the time a question had been asked and he had answered it, I realised a quarter of an hour had gone by and I had forgotten what the question was, or even whether he had answered it.

But ignoring the question is politics, I suppose, and a lot of them are pretty good at that.

"A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do, honey, you hear me?

All this ran into news time, which started with what is now Coronavirus News, plus the inevitable - and pointless - analysis of Pedro’s speech, plus reactions to Pedro’s speech, plus reactions to the reactions to Pedro’s speech, all equally pointless, an array of experts on things coronavirus, rather less pointless, and ending up with sports news, which included “coverage” of the Athletic Bilbao-Real Sociedad Copa del Rey derby final, which should have been played yesterday in Sevilla, but obviously couldn’t be, but there was footage of Athletic/Real Sociedad flags and shirts on the balconies yesterday at 8 pm (tribute to our brave players, and playeresses too in the female Athletic and Real Sociedad teams), and finally the weather (the weather is the only slot that can’t mention coronavirus).

So git, girl, you go on, yes you go on back to your house and you take care of old daddy, see?

Guess what the weekly Informe Semanal round-up was about?

I'll be there by and by.

A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do."

Except they focused on how bad they have it elsewhere – Ecuador, with the bodies being left out in the streets, and Nicaragua, where Mr Ortega has finally resurfaced after a month away from the cameras.

But the Deputy, he don't get to do that, do he?

Not dead, then.

Although he’d have had a nerve if he had died and had come back to say No problem, comrades.

No, only the Sheriff do.

He claimed there had been 1,500 deaths in the last month, and only 1 coronavirus death. S

Does, I mean. Maybe I should suggest "Sheriff" from now on.

ome stuff!

Anyway, I digress.

Naturally he can’t be lying because he’s the President, but let’s remember this is a country which pooh-poohed the problem from the start and positively encouraged social non-distancing?

What José María Iruarrizaga (for it was he, the aforemisdefined deppity) means is that we're all going to have more money.

Somebody should be asking him how they do it, especially since it now seems the Chinese haven’t been completely up front about the whole thing and we don’t believe them just as much as we wanted to believe them before.

Whoopee.

I had already heard that we don't have to pay our VAT until 1 June, too (usually we'd have to present first-quarter VAT round about now).

But we need their spare mask, respirator and glove supplies now, so best not to rock the boat.

They announced a round of cuts and rebates and grants and freebies and dildos and blow-up dolls, likely as not, on a first-come-first-served basis the other day, and apparently loads of people were sitting at their PCs at midnight to get in first when the clock struck twelve midnight and they could apply.

Ho-hum.

I forget the figures now, but it was dismal.

Another 2K to finish.

Thousands of people looking for very few slots.

On the positive side, April’s not looking too bad workwise in the end.

I wasn't among them (I have the dolls already).

@Christel

April hasn't been so bad, and it's going wellish still.

Coming back to Corona, it is difficult to understand why the mortality rate (I think it is called like that, I mean deaths per million) is so high for example especially in Lombardy (Italy), Madrid or NY, while Germany in a whole seems to get off for the moment rather cheaply, fortunately (don't get me wrong, I believe each dead is too much), and Portugal, so close to Spain, where the late Luis Sepúlveda has been infected, has relatively low numbers.

Belgium,

But I digress.

instead, has AFAIK one of the highest mortality rates worldwide (to say nothing of San Marino), much higher than in Spain. It's a puzzle for me!

Spain finally brought its deaths down to 410 yesterday.

You'll find lots of reasons for the "German phenomenon" in the international media and on the country's relatively low case fatality rate (number of deaths per confirmed infections) rather than the mortality rate (number of deaths per million inhabitants), but many of these articles are now a bit outdated due to the relative (only relative) normalising of the German figures.

Not just below 500, but edging towards less than 400.

Really it's better to avoid questions such as why Belgium is "worse " than Germany because these sorts of discussions then often break down into ugly arguments based on nationality.

Ain't life grand?

Belgium is probably the only country that is releasing "raw" unconfirmed figures that include untested suspected cases of Covid19 (for example the UK yesterday announced a total to date of 15K confirmed hospital deaths, but an estimate was mentioned of a possible 7.5K additional deaths in care homes, which would have been included in the Belgian data).

North sea tigers

Maybe it's more helpful, for example, to ask why Lombardy had such high fatality/mortality rates compared to most of the rest of Italy and the answer is that it was the first place in Europe to uncover a vast hidden cluster (the only comparable case would be the Madrid area).

When I was a little boy, my dad worked on the north sea oil rigs.

There had been Covid19 cases in Italy before, but these were isolated and limited using testing, identification of "patient 0" and contact tracing as suggested by the WHO (as also happened in the Bavarian car plant case or in the case of the famous UK "super-spreader").

At that time he earned more then a premiership footballer, in 2011 oil was $114 a barrel, today, and we should make a note of the day, today oil is worth LESS than $0.

The problem is that the WHO testing protocols limited testing to those who had been in contact with suspected sources of infection.

The economies of the world are going to have to find another cash crop, any ideas?

Fortunately thanks to the insistence of one woman working in an ICU in the Lodi area "non-compliant" testing was eventually started and the Lombardy cluster was uncovered.

Has anyone any idea what this could mean for the world economy?

She no doubt saved many thousands of lives.

Sorry if this question is off track, but I mean really the world has gone insane, here is the proof.

But by this stage the virus had been circulating for weeks and thousands of people had been infected.

Where are we going?

Were there special conditions in south-east Lombardy that welcomed the virus?

Also I was going to ask, I can remember being told for at least 30 ears oil was going to run out soon, was that the biggest lie ever told?

Probably the answer lies in the fact that it's a densely populated, heavily industrialised and polluted lowlands area that is also the logistical hub for that part of Europe (Amazon is based there), almost identical to Wuhan in China, to which it is linked by two daily direct Alitalia flights.

What else have they lied about?

Because of the evident danger of the problem based on this initial cluster, Lombardy was partially closed down on 24 February and all of Italy was "fully" closed down on 9 March.

Economics

This meant that the vast majority of regions that had relatively few cases had to adopt very strict measures at an early stage and this accounts for the relative limitation of the outbreak to the areas around the original clusters in the North and the relatively low mortality rates in much of the Peninsula.

Father Christmas and the Tooth Fairy?

This success can be seen in the fact that in my part of Lombardy, to the north, near Switzerland, hospitals continued to function normally and the province was able to helicopter in moveable intensive care patients who could not be cared for in the provinces directly affected.

Oil isn’t really worth less than nothing.

We are really only feeling the effects of the pandemic now, with the rest of Europe, despite the fact that Bergamo is only 50 km away.

Typical media bollocks.

I think that one problem with the cases after Lombardy was that just as Italy had been looking for the "Chinese connection", the rest of Europe and the world started to look for the "Italian skiing holiday connection" instead of testing based on suspect symptoms (although I suspect Madrid was basically a re-run of Lombardy).

Soon the planes will start flying and things will be back to normal and oil prices will recover.

I think the "Italian skiing holiday connection" will eventually be seen as flawed also because the skiing resort areas here never had major clusters.

As for the economy...

The least affected provinces in Lombardy, certainly for the first month, were the three Alpine provinces where resorts are located.

The “recession” in itself is not problematic.

It just means we made less stuff.

Monday 20 April

Well, we didn’t really need it anyway.

Apr 20

Except maybe PPE.

"We'll speed up tax refunds and taxpayers will have more money".

The only problem is where firms go under and jobs are lost, because it will take time for other firms to pick up those workers.

It's a quote from the Bizkaia Provincial Council's Tax Secretary.

Hence the government chucking money at everyone to keep things afloat.

Or Secretary of Taxation.

Or Treasury Secretary.

The world won’t actually have changed (much) post Covid.

Or whatever. I forget how I translated it last, because I do more than a few translations for the local government here.

So don’t worry about the economy. It is pretty meaningless anyway.

Anything but Tax Deputy or Treasury Deputy. Deputy?

Growth is ultimately only a measure of greed.

Jesus H.

All we need is health and a few basic necessities, like bikes and beer.

Since the Provincial Council (best I can do) is Diputación Provincial (got it, Diputación?

Live on nothing

...), the Main Man is the Diputado General, which they have on their website as General Deputy.

Great idea Chris I'll come and live with you, it's not far, I'll get there on my BMX, we'll live in the woods off natures rich bounty, forget Covid, forget capitalism, forget politics, forget the media and the false hope it controls us with, forget football, forget Saturday night curry, forget holidays, forget the x box, forget Netflix, forget the latest mercedes, forget seeing Liam Gallagher play Old trafford, forget Brexit, forget social media and forget sick pay.

At least until the vaccine gets here, about 18 months I reckon.

But then they have Deputy this and Deputy that and Deputy the other, Environment Deputy, Institutional Relations Deputy, Central Government Relations Deputy ...

Tuesday 21 April

Not my translations, I assure you.

06:38

But you all know how difficult it is to translate all that stuff ...

Took a look at the thread when I logged on for work this morning to catch up on the stuff about the economy.

I've told them "Deputy" sounds crap.

Shunning the light, them ProZ economists, they come out at night, they do.

But they don't have the culture.

In fact, the very word "Deputy" brings any "Deputy" down a peg here.

They leave their burrows in search of hope, meaning and certainty. I know hope, meaning and certainty doesn’t mean much, but I had to make it a classic three, if you see what I mean, because it has to be three, and two will never do.

And it could be more than one peg.

I can just see Winston and his speechwriter agonising over that one:

Does anyone out there remember the wonderful, but in this case rather poignant, Deputy Dawg?

I have nothing to offer you but sweat and blood – oh bollocks, no, how about – I have nothing to offer you but blood, and tears too – or it could be tears and blood?

Deputy Dawg was a dawg, FFS.

Or tears and sweat?

And they didn't even pronounce it Dep-yoo-tee, as I remember.

No, Winston, it lacks a little punch … wait a minute, wait!

It was "Deppity Dawg".

I even sent a Deputy Dawg video to the customer once.

Yes, it’s coming to me, no, don’t say anything, don’t interrupt my train of thought, yes, yes, it’s coming to me now, what we have to do, in a kind of, you know, symbolic symbolism to, er, symbolise the Big Three - you, FDR and nasty old Joe - is to stick in a Big Three of our own, sweat, blood and tears.

Deputy?

Or tears, blood and sweat.

Or even better, in alphabetical order, blood, sweat and tears.

WTF?

Yes, that’s it, blood, sweat and tears.

Brilliant.

You’ll knock the punters dead with that one, Win.

Or Deputy in the sense of the assistant sheriff in all those Westerns.

Yes, Win.

Who always gets killed, too, early on, but afterwards Gary Cooper or someone blasts the bad guys to kingdom come before the gal swoons.

Now there’s something we could work in too.

But Gary, now he was the Sheriff.

“Win with Winston.” Winston’s a Winner.” “Winston’s a Win.” “Winston is Win-Win.”

The Main Man.

All right, all right, maybe later …

And Gary got the girl.

Having said that, I reckon Chris S is right.

So we’ve lost a month or two. It’ll pick up, you’ll see.

He got all the best lines, too:

Won’t be long before we’re back to normal, the rich much richer and the poor much poorer.

"A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do, honey, you hear me?

Status Quo.

I mean the group, of course.

Remember that song:

So git, girl, you go on, yes you go on back to your house and you take care of old daddy, see?

Again, again, again, again, oh bloody hell, not again, again, again, oh no, FFS, not again, again, again, again …

I'll be there by and by.

A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do."

399 deaths yesterday.

But the Deputy, he don't get to do that, do he?

It’s hardly appropriate to add “Rejoice!!”, but you can’t say it’s not encouraging that Spain’s now looking back at the 400 mark in the rear-view mirror.

No, only the Sheriff do.

These days I’ve become an addict to Law & Order UK.

I can’t hack the original US version, it’s too sharp-suited for me.

Does, I mean.

Maybe I should suggest "Sheriff" from now on.

But in either version, I have to keep an eye on the kind of talk they talk. I have to rewind occasionally to recap and understand my own language, too, what with all the copper jargon they throw in in the UK version:

Anyway, I digress.

“This geezah got any form, Matty?

What José María Iruarrizaga (for it was he, the aforemisdefined deppity) means is that we're all going to have more money.

“Yer, guv, a few stretches ‘e has.

Whoopee. I had already heard that we don't have to pay our VAT until 1 June, too (usually we'd have to present first-quarter VAT round about now).

Went dahn for A&B and GBH, plus the odd bit of D&D, but gone straight since then.

They announced a round of cuts and rebates and grants and freebies and dildos and blow-up dolls, likely as not, on a first-come-first-served basis the other day, and apparently loads of people were sitting at their PCs at midnight to get in first when the clock struck twelve midnight and they could apply.

Put an APB out on ‘im, so uniform’s lookin’ to get eyes on ‘im right now.”

I forget the figures now, but it was dismal.

It’s not so much the acronyms as the fast chirpy Cockney talk, though.

By the time my brain's figured out the actual utterances with all the glottal stops and H-shedding, it has to deal with the subtext.

Thousands of people looking for very few slots.

Anuvvah episode this offftah, I mean another episode this afternoon …

I wasn't among them (I have the dolls already).

More economists

April hasn't been so bad, and it's going wellish still.

08:16

But I digress.

Over the last few years I've met a few people who, when asked what they did for a crust, told me they were "economists" at their company.

Spain finally brought its deaths down to 410 yesterday.

Now, my idea of an economist is Stiglitz, Krugman, Keynes and the like, but as far as I know they don't work at a company.

Not just below 500, but edging towards less than 400.

They write books on it and so on, or articles in the press.

Ain't life grand?

Either the models are changing and companies really do have "economists" now, or what they really mean is that they're accountants, but economist sounds miles better.

North sea tigers

I just can't see that name plate on the door saying "Mr Fred Bloggs - Economist", but I could go with "Mr Fred Bloggs - Accountant".

When I was a little boy, my dad worked on the north sea oil rigs.

Evidently a better class of name would help.

At that time he earned more then a premiership footballer, in 2011 oil was $114 a barrel, today, and we should make a note of the day, today oil is worth LESS than $0.

"Mr. Aloysius Q. Ravensdale - Economist".

The economies of the world are going to have to find another cash crop, any ideas?

Am I wrong?

Has anyone any idea what this could mean for the world economy?

Does anyone else know an "economist" who works at whatever an economist does at a company?

Sorry if this question is off track, but I mean really the world has gone insane, here is the proof.

TonyTK

Where are we going?

Sorry to confuse any Americans here

Also I was going to ask, I can remember being told for at least 30 ears oil was going to run out soon, was that the biggest lie ever told?

08:17

What else have they lied about?

... forget seeing Liam Gallagher play Old trafford ...

Economics

You had me worried there for a second.

Father Christmas and the Tooth Fairy?

You mean Emirates Old Trafford, don't you - i.e. the Lancashire cricket ground - not Old Trafford as in Theatre of Dreams.

Oil isn’t really worth less than nothing.

Never happen.

Typical media bollocks.

Liam is a massive fan of the soap-dodgers ...

Soon the planes will start flying and things will be back to normal and oil prices will recover.

Economist vs. accountant.

As for the economy...

09:17

The “recession” in itself is not problematic.

It just means we made less stuff.

Have you been told they were an economist by a non-native English speaker?

Well, we didn’t really need it anyway.

Sounds like a literal translation/false friends type of thing.

Except maybe PPE.

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The only problem is where firms go under and jobs are lost, because it will take time for other firms to pick up those workers.

Corona quarantine diary

Hence the government chucking money at everyone to keep things afloat.

Local time: 20:44

The world won’t actually have changed (much) post Covid.

Apr 21

So don’t worry about the economy.

It is pretty meaningless anyway.

Yes, it's people from here all right, and what they say is "economista".

Growth is ultimately only a measure of greed.

If they want to tell me they're accountants, they can say "contable" and not "economista".

All we need is health and a few basic necessities, like bikes and beer.

But I'm concluding that it's simply a ploy to ramp up a profession regarded as boring, in the same way as translators might call themselves linguistic consultants, or people emptying bins for the local council might call themselves waste control officers.

Live on nothing

When I’m asked what I do, I say I’m a surgeon first.

You might as well try it on, right?

Great idea Chris I'll come and live with you, it's not far, I'll get there on my BMX, we'll live in the woods off natures rich bounty, forget Covid, forget capitalism, forget politics, forget the media and the false hope it controls us with, forget football, forget Saturday night curry, forget holidays, forget the x box, forget Netflix, forget the latest mercedes, forget seeing Liam Gallagher play Old trafford, forget Brexit, forget social media and forget sick pay.

At least until the vaccine gets here, about 18 months I reckon.

See the awe spread over their faces as they realise they are in the presence of a man with rock-steady Hands that Heal, a man with Power over Life and Death, a man who Repairs the Torn, Broken Chassis of Human Beings.

Tuesday 21 April

To give you an idea of the effect this can have, I was at a dinner party where one of the guests was a successful surgeon, and the host was carving up the roast beef, with a jocular running commentary of “What do you think of my technique, John?”;

06:38

“Steady and precise,

Took a look at the thread when I logged on for work this morning to catch up on the stuff about the economy.

John, that’s what it’s all about, right?”;

"Clean, precise cuts, John, that's the way to go, eh?" etc.

Shunning the light, them ProZ economists, they come out at night, they do.

When he’d finished, and a dozen or so slices of meat lay on the platter, he beamed at this chap and said:

They leave their burrows in search of hope, meaning and certainty.

I know hope, meaning and certainty doesn’t mean much, but I had to make it a classic three, if you see what I mean, because it has to be three, and two will never do.

“So what do you think, John?

I can just see Winston and his speechwriter agonising over that one:

I’d make a pretty good surgeon, wouldn’t I?”

I have nothing to offer you but sweat and blood – oh bollocks, no, how about – I have nothing to offer you but blood, and tears too – or it could be tears and blood?

And the surgeon nodded and said:

Or tears and sweat?

“You did that really well,

No, Winston, it lacks a little punch … wait a minute, wait!

Fred, you certainly did.

Now let’s see you put it all back together again.”

Yes, it’s coming to me, no, don’t say anything, don’t interrupt my train of thought, yes, yes, it’s coming to me now, what we have to do, in a kind of, you know, symbolic symbolism to, er, symbolise the Big Three - you, FDR and nasty old Joe - is to stick in a Big Three of our own, sweat, blood and tears.

Beat that. You can just see John issuing his orders, gruffly but calmly, to the rest of the team, bending over his incisions as the nurse wipes his noble brow, and someone quavers:

Or tears, blood and sweat.

Or even better, in alphabetical order, blood, sweat and tears.

"He's not responding, John.

Yes, that’s it, blood, sweat and tears.

Brilliant.

You’ll knock the punters dead with that one, Win.

We're losing him, he's going", and he looks up and says,

Yes, Win.

"We’re not losing anybody, and he's not going anywhere.

Now there’s something we could work in too.

Now hand me that scalpel."

“Win with Winston.”

Winston’s a Winner.”

“Winston’s a Win.”

“Winston is Win-Win.”

If that’s as far as it goes, all well and good.

All right, all right, maybe later …

But sometimes it doesn’t.

I had just passed myself off as a surgeon to a lady at a cocktail party, but then she started in with the awkward questions:

Having said that, I reckon Chris S is right.

So we’ve lost a month or two.

It’ll pick up, you’ll see.

“So which hospital do you work at, then?” she asked, sipping her Krug all smokily.

Won’t be long before we’re back to normal, the rich much richer and the poor much poorer.

Not smoky or a smoking lady in the foxy sense, I mean.

Status Quo. I mean the group, of course.

Remember that song:

She just happened to be smoking a big cheroot, and there was smoke all round her.

Again, again, again, again, oh bloody hell, not again, again, again, oh no, FFS, not again, again, again, again …

Not smoky in the other sense at all, in fact.

399 deaths yesterday.

She did look a bit like Elizabeth Taylor.

It’s hardly appropriate to add “Rejoice!!”, but you can’t say it’s not encouraging that Spain’s now looking back at the 400 mark in the rear-view mirror.

But I mean Elizabeth Taylor in the present day.

These days I’ve become an addict to Law & Order UK. I can’t hack the original US version, it’s too sharp-suited for me.

“Oh, not a medical surgeon, no,” I replied, “I am a word surgeon, madam.”

But in either version, I have to keep an eye on the kind of talk they talk. I have to rewind occasionally to recap and understand my own language, too, what with all the copper jargon they throw in in the UK version:

She slowly blew some smoke out of the side of her mouth and fluttered her eyelashes, getting a little smoky in the other sense.

“This geezah got any form, Matty?

Along with the actual smoke she was blowing out, I mean.

“Yer, guv, a few stretches ‘e has.

“And what does a word surgeon do, exactly?”, she purred. It was an odd kind of purr, but a purr nonetheless, albeit a purr that had evidently become much croakier over the years.

Went dahn for A&B and GBH, plus the odd bit of D&D, but gone straight since then.

Croakier and smokier.

Put an APB out on ‘im, so uniform’s lookin’ to get eyes on ‘im right now.”

With smokier understood as at the beginning, smokier from excess tobacco.

It’s not so much the acronyms as the fast chirpy Cockney talk, though. By the time my brain's figured out the actual utterances with all the glottal stops and H-shedding, it has to deal with the subtext.

But perhaps we should get on …

Anuvvah episode this offftah, I mean another episode this afternoon …

“It’s simple.

I deal in words”, I informed her, airily.

More economists

“Some people have a truckload of words to convey, and there’s another truckload of people they want to read those words, to convince them of something or other.

08:16

They give me the words, and I simply operate on them.

I avail myself of my linguistic scalpel and forceps to execute precise cuts and grafts with these words, if you will.

I put one in, I take one out, in, out, shake it all about, and that’s what it’s all about.

Over the last few years I've met a few people who, when asked what they did for a crust, told me they were "economists" at their company.

The words I end up with are basically the same, though different, because the words themselves have changed, and now they mean something to different people.

Now, my idea of an economist is Stiglitz, Krugman, Keynes and the like, but as far as I know they don't work at a company.

Essentially what I do is help the first set of people persuade the other people to give, to take, to come, to go, to laugh, to cry, to cheer, to boo, to buy, to sell, to invest, to divest, to love, to loathe, to vote for or vote against, to be or not to be.

They write books on it and so on, or articles in the press.

That is the question. I hope I’ve made myself clear.”

Either the models are changing and companies really do have "economists" now, or what they really mean is that they're accountants, but economist sounds miles better.

“I think so,” she said, “you must be a spin doctor, a politician, maybe a government spokesman, something like that?”

I just can't see that name plate on the door saying "Mr Fred Bloggs - Economist", but I could go with "Mr Fred Bloggs - Accountant".

“Madam”, was my stiff retort.

“I am a linguistic consultant.”

Evidently a better class of name would help.

And, because I could see she was gearing up to ask what that was too, I finally had to come out with it:

"Mr. Aloysius Q. Ravensdale - Economist".

“I’m a commercial translator, see.

Am I wrong?

Mostly financial-technical.”

Does anyone else know an "economist" who works at whatever an economist does at a company?

I could see her lip curling already.

TonyTK

Probably as the prelude to an attempt to squeeze out from under two or three millimetres of lipstick and scuttle off her face, but all she said was:

Sorry to confuse any Americans here

“Most interesting, I’m sure.

08:17

Do excuse me.”

... forget seeing Liam Gallagher play Old trafford ...

See what I mean?

You had me worried there for a second.

No respect.

You mean Emirates Old Trafford, don't you - i.e. the Lancashire cricket ground - not Old Trafford as in Theatre of Dreams.

But translation’s all I’ve got and I’m stuck with it, so I have to just carry on as best I can.

Never happen.

Economising

Liam is a massive fan of the soap-dodgers ...

Are you really looking for a sensible linguistic discussion?

Economist vs. accountant.

It's true, "economists" normally work for governments and banks, whereas number-crunchers at companies normally work "in finance".

09:17

I think it's just a peculiarity of English that we normally only use economy to mean the macroeconomy.

Have you been told they were an economist by a non-native English speaker?

In Scandiwegian, what we call "finance", they call "økonomi".

Sounds like a literal translation/false friends type of thing.

Maybe it's a bit like that translator/interpreter thing, where we're the only ones who know the difference or give a monkey's.

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In finance

That's precisely my point.

For me, the word economist always conjures up the macroeconomy, but I just can't see Fred Bloggs Economist sitting at his desk at ABC Steelmakers working out GDP and rounds of quantitative squeezing.

Local time: 20:44

But come to think of it, Chris, that's another thing they say, "Oh, I work in finance."

Right.

Apr 21

But to answer your initial question,

Yes, it's people from here all right, and what they say is "economista".

No, I'm not!

If they want to tell me they're accountants, they can say "contable" and not "economista".

As if!!

But I'm concluding that it's simply a ploy to ramp up a profession regarded as boring, in the same way as translators might call themselves linguistic consultants, or people emptying bins for the local council might call themselves waste control officers.

Precisely, was just thinking the same thing.

When I’m asked what I do, I say I’m a surgeon first. You might as well try it on, right?

Yes, it’s the same difference in my language like that in Spanish and Scandinavian languages, which is why I immediately recognized Mervyn’s confusion.

See the awe spread over their faces as they realise they are in the presence of a man with rock-steady Hands that Heal, a man with Power over Life and Death, a man who Repairs the Torn, Broken Chassis of Human Beings.

Over here, at Economics and Business University department, “macroeconomy” is just one subject of small span in the curriculum to which no special attention given.

To give you an idea of the effect this can have, I was at a dinner party where one of the guests was a successful surgeon, and the host was carving up the roast beef, with a jocular running commentary of “What do you think of my technique, John?”;

Most of those graduate “economists” end up working at jobs that look more like accountant jobs (according to Anglosaxon standards) and never deal with macroeconomy much, unless they specialize in Finance (which is a separate branch).

“Steady and precise,

@Mervyn, what about a cleaning lady calling herself a sanitary engineer?

John, that’s what it’s all about, right?”;

"Clean, precise cuts, John, that's the way to go, eh?" etc.

Sanitary engineer

When he’d finished, and a dozen or so slices of meat lay on the platter, he beamed at this chap and said:

Of course!

“So what do you think, John?

And the degendering would also placate the politically correct/non-sexist/MeToo crowd, because of all those "cleaning gentlemen" out there too.

I’d make a pretty good surgeon, wouldn’t I?”

Mm, cleaning gentlemen.

And the surgeon nodded and said:

Now there's a term.

“You did that really well,

Agree, it’s sexist, where are the cleaning gentlemen?

Fred, you certainly did. Now let’s see you put it all back together again.”

Her boss is probably a man, the owner of the sanitary engineering firm?

Beat that.

You can just see John issuing his orders, gruffly but calmly, to the rest of the team, bending over his incisions as the nurse wipes his noble brow, and someone quavers:

They must be working at full capacity during these Corona times and are pretty exposed, Kudos to them.

"He's not responding, John.

From confused.com to staedtler.com

We're losing him, he's going", and he looks up and says,

I immediately recognized Mervyn’s confusion.

"We’re not losing anybody, and he's not going anywhere.

I very much doubt that Mervyn is confused.

Now hand me that scalpel."

He's just pondering the imponderables and asking the questions that should never be asked.

If that’s as far as it goes, all well and good.

Or answered.

But sometimes it doesn’t.

I had just passed myself off as a surgeon to a lady at a cocktail party, but then she started in with the awkward questions:

Here, perhaps, is another:

“So which hospital do you work at, then?” she asked, sipping her Krug all smokily.

Is 5B the grade of pencil you used before typewriters arrived in Yugoslavia?

Not smoky or a smoking lady in the foxy sense, I mean.

@Chris

She just happened to be smoking a big cheroot, and there was smoke all round her.

You're better than that, Chris.

Not smoky in the other sense at all, in fact.

Questions are here to be asked, and answered.

She did look a bit like Elizabeth Taylor.

Is this also a question that should never be asked or answered?

But I mean Elizabeth Taylor in the present day.

If I tell you what 5B means, I will have to get rid of you or send you a Corona bug by post mail, to Wales.

“Oh, not a medical surgeon, no,” I replied, “I am a word surgeon, madam.”

He just gets carried away.

She slowly blew some smoke out of the side of her mouth and fluttered her eyelashes, getting a little smoky in the other sense.

No, he is not LOL

Along with the actual smoke she was blowing out, I mean.

Carried away

“And what does a word surgeon do, exactly?”, she purred.

It was an odd kind of purr, but a purr nonetheless, albeit a purr that had evidently become much croakier over the years.

I suppose so.

Hope so.

Croakier and smokier.

But he isn't like that.

With smokier understood as at the beginning, smokier from excess tobacco.

Milan Condak

But perhaps we should get on …

English to Czech

“It’s simple. I deal in words”, I informed her, airily.

Software for reading, listening and MT

“Some people have a truckload of words to convey, and there’s another truckload of people they want to read those words, to convince them of something or other.

Andrew Morris wrote:

They give me the words, and I simply operate on them. I avail myself of my linguistic scalpel and forceps to execute precise cuts and grafts with these words, if you will. I put one in, I take one out, in, out, shake it all about, and that’s what it’s all about.

http://www.condak.cz/nove/2020-04/19/cs/08.html

The words I end up with are basically the same, though different, because the words themselves have changed, and now they mean something to different people.

There is a software for reading, listening and MT.

Essentially what I do is help the first set of people persuade the other people to give, to take, to come, to go, to laugh, to cry, to cheer, to boo, to buy, to sell, to invest, to divest, to love, to loathe, to vote for or vote against, to be or not to be.

Milan

That is the question.

I hope I’ve made myself clear.”

Local time: 13:44

“I think so,” she said, “you must be a spin doctor, a politician, maybe a government spokesman, something like that?”

For the record...

“Madam”, was my stiff retort. “I am a linguistic consultant.”

Many large corporations do indeed employ economists, and I have met a couple of them.

And, because I could see she was gearing up to ask what that was too, I finally had to come out with it:

They do their own macroeconomic modelling so the company isn't dependent on outside economic forecasts, but they also model the impact of potential economic trends on the company's own products and services, producing both sectoral and geographic/regional models at a level of granularity that would be difficult to outsource.

“I’m a commercial translator, see.

Even some smaller companies employ economists, depending on their industry - for example, oil and gas.

Mostly financial-technical.”

On the subject of oil and gas, the price of West Texas Intermediate did indeed turn negative on the public markets.

I could see her lip curling already.

What happened is that the local spot price was already in negative territory, meaning that producers here in Texas are paying others to take oil off their hands.

Probably as the prelude to an attempt to squeeze out from under two or three millimetres of lipstick and scuttle off her face, but all she said was:

An empty oil barrel is worth more than a full barrel of oil.

“Most interesting, I’m sure.

That's because many producers have carried on producing at full or near-to-full capacity, and available storage capacity is filling up, quickly.

Do excuse me.”

Also, much of the free capacity has already been booked, so there are producers with oil on their hands and nowhere to store it.

See what I mean?

As a result, the futures price started converging with the spot price because traders holding contracts for May delivery realised they would have nowhere to store the oil they had contracted to buy.

No respect.

The price for June delivery is still holding firm at over $20 a barrel, but it's beginning to look vulnerable in light of May prices that at times reached minus $40 a barrel.

But translation’s all I’ve got and I’m stuck with it, so I have to just carry on as best I can.

Yes, at some point oil prices will likely start to recover, slowly, as economies reopen, but it's not just the virus that's causing the dramatic slump in oil prices:

you might recall the price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia.

Economising

That still hasn't been satisfactorily resolved, and the glut of oil on the markets means that even production cuts could take many months to have any real effect on oil prices.

Are you really looking for a sensible linguistic discussion?

Air travel hasn't ground to a halt during the pandemic, of course, with somewhere between 20 and 25% of flights still operating.

It's true, "economists" normally work for governments and banks, whereas number-crunchers at companies normally work "in finance".

But nobody knows what the air travel industry is going to look like once the present crisis has subsided.

I think it's just a peculiarity of English that we normally only use economy to mean the macroeconomy.

There are likely to be fewer airlines, operating smaller fleets.

In Scandiwegian, what we call "finance", they call "økonomi".

So many scenarios are possible, ranging from significant passenger reluctance to fly, down to a surge in demand as people rediscover their love of flying and go back to borrowing money they can't afford to repay.

Maybe it's a bit like that translator/interpreter thing, where we're the only ones who know the difference or give a monkey's.

We just don't know.

In finance

One thing we can be sure of, though, is that the "new normal" is going to be significantly different to the "old normal" in many ways.

That's precisely my point.

For me, the word economist always conjures up the macroeconomy, but I just can't see Fred Bloggs Economist sitting at his desk at ABC Steelmakers working out GDP and rounds of quantitative squeezing.

But we just don't know which ways.

But come to think of it, Chris, that's another thing they say, "Oh, I work in finance."

Right.

Maybe things will calm down once effective vaccines become widely available, for example with air travel (or maybe any travel) restricted to passengers with a valid vaccination certificate or an official medical waiver certificate.

But to answer your initial question,

Which would drive the antivaxxers crazy, of course, but that would be a positive side-effect

No, I'm not!

Thank you Robin

As if!!

I mentioned the oil price because in his Sunday address, D Trump talked about a deal between him, Putin and a saudi king.

Precisely, was just thinking the same thing.

The deal being to cut all production to stabilize the oil price.

Yes, it’s the same difference in my language like that in Spanish and Scandinavian languages, which is why I immediately recognized Mervyn’s confusion.

Despite this, despite three of the most powerful people in the world making a deal it still did not work.

Over here, at Economics and Business University department, “macroeconomy” is just one subject of small span in the curriculum to which no special attention given.

As you point out in your excellent post, the deal will take some time to filter into the market, but THEY (that is Trump, Putin, King of saude) should of known this weeks ago.

Most of those graduate “economists” end up working at jobs that look more like accountant jobs (according to Anglosaxon standards) and never deal with macroeconomy much, unless they specialize in Finance (which is a separate branch).

Therefore my question returns as, how can such mismanagement get us out of the current crisis?

@Mervyn, what about a cleaning lady calling herself a sanitary engineer?

They cannot do their oil sums, never mind pandemic sums.

Sanitary engineer

In a mad world, only the mad are sane.

Of course!

I must admit grave doubts as to our respective governments in dealing with this crisis, and my firm belief that it has been either vastly overestimated, or underestimated.

And the degendering would also placate the politically correct/non-sexist/MeToo crowd, because of all those "cleaning gentlemen" out there too.

I guess when the experts in the oil market can’t get it right, and the experts in epidemiology can’t agree on what’s best, we can’t really expect cockwombles like Putin and Trump to be right on top of it either?

Mm, cleaning gentlemen.

(Note to ProZ police: That isn’t political; it’s fact.)

Now there's a term.

page-20

Agree, it’s sexist, where are the cleaning gentlemen?

Local time: 08:53

Her boss is probably a man, the owner of the sanitary engineering firm?

Wednesday 22 April

They must be working at full capacity during these Corona times and are pretty exposed, Kudos to them.

Apr 22

From confused.com to staedtler.com

Deaths up again, only around 30 more than the day before, but still rather depressing.

I immediately recognized Mervyn’s confusion.

“Government steps back in the wake of chaotic handling, and will now allow children out for walks”, rants the headline.

I very much doubt that Mervyn is confused.

Only once a day, with one parent, and only for a certain distance.

He's just pondering the imponderables and asking the questions that should never be asked.

Obviously everyone has a different opinion.

Or answered.

I don’t think it’s a great idea just yet, but then I don’t have sprogs running around the house all day long, and then again I can understand the people I know who can’t wait.

Here, perhaps, is another:

The sub-article goes on:

Is 5B the grade of pencil you used before typewriters arrived in Yugoslavia?

“Tributes flood in as local translator has lockdown birthday.

Speaking to an empty silent street shortly after the church bells struck twelve last night, from the balcony of his flat in central Bilbao where he is spending his confinement,

@Chris

Mr Henderson conveyed his gratitude for kind words and best wishes at this difficult time, and …”

You're better than that, Chris.

I can’t quote the rest because I don’t want to overwhelm you with emotion.

Questions are here to be asked, and answered.

Suffice it to say I’ll never see 39 again.

Is this also a question that should never be asked or answered?

Better go out and get some plonk.

If I tell you what 5B means, I will have to get rid of you or send you a Corona bug by post mail, to Wales.

And a nice bit of hake, sssh.

He just gets carried away.

After I’ve done a bit of trudging through 3K of blaargh …

No, he is not LOL

@Chris. Cockwomble, now there's one to note down.

Long is the shadow of the Wombles of Wimbledon Common.

Carried away

Local time: 07:53

I suppose so. Hope so.

I believe it's too early

But he isn't like that.

Portugal is also preparing to gradually lift some lockdown restrictions on May like small neighbourhood shops, hairdressers and childcare centres likely to be the first services to re-open.

Milan Condak

I wonder what "strategies" will childcare assistants use for a "new behaviour management" with young children and toddlers?

English to Czech

Michael Wetzel

Software for reading, listening and MT

Long-time reader, first-time writer.

Andrew Morris wrote:

Thank you and happy birthday!

http://www.condak.cz/nove/2020-04/19/cs/08.html

In a mad world, only the mad are sane.

I must admit grave doubts as to our respective governments in dealing with this crisis, and my firm belief that it has been either vastly overestimated, or underestimated.

There is a software for reading, listening and MT.

No, no, even in a mad world, most of the mad are also mad, it's just that all of the sane are mad.

Milan

Or, to put it more clearly and simply:

Local time: 13:44

Given a mad world, in which m = mad and s = sane and the following premises apply: P1: s OR m P2: IF s THEN m

For the record...

It is true that you have to be mad to be sane:

Many large corporations do indeed employ economists, and I have met a couple of them.

IF NOT m THEN s (P1) 2.

IF NOT m THEN m (P1+P2)

Therefore: IF NOT m THEN NOT s

They do their own macroeconomic modelling so the company isn't dependent on outside economic forecasts, but they also model the impact of potential economic trends on the company's own products and services, producing both sectoral and geographic/regional models at a level of granularity that would be difficult to outsource.

Alternatively, you obviously can't be sane and sane, because that directly violates P2.

Even some smaller companies employ economists, depending on their industry - for example, oil and gas.

However, there is nothing to prevent someone from being mad and mad.

On the subject of oil and gas, the price of West Texas Intermediate did indeed turn negative on the public markets.

It's roughly the same issue as when you got mixed up along the lines of "If I'm going to lack substance, I might as well at least make sure to lack polish."

What happened is that the local spot price was already in negative territory, meaning that producers here in Texas are paying others to take oil off their hands.

PS: I apologize if I messed something up.

It has been almost two-and-a-half decades since I took a symbolic logic course to fulfill my general education requirement in math without taking a real math course.

An empty oil barrel is worth more than a full barrel of oil.

PPS: I apologize for not being able to work in an "s AND m". PPPS:

That's because many producers have carried on producing at full or near-to-full capacity, and available storage capacity is filling up, quickly.

By the way, while we're on the topic, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" is a wonderful book - I enjoyed the film, but the book is much better and much more to the point.

Also, much of the free capacity has already been booked, so there are producers with oil on their hands and nowhere to store it.

Madness = sanity + mortality

As a result, the futures price started converging with the spot price because traders holding contracts for May delivery realised they would have nowhere to store the oil they had contracted to buy.

Thank you for your contribution Micheal, the fr

The price for June delivery is still holding firm at over $20 a barrel, but it's beginning to look vulnerable in light of May prices that at times reached minus $40 a barrel.

agility of the claim of sanity has been exposed by numerous psychologist's over the years, note;

Yes, at some point oil prices will likely start to recover, slowly, as economies reopen, but it's not just the virus that's causing the dramatic slump in oil prices: you might recall the price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia.

Stanford prison experiment,

That still hasn't been satisfactorily resolved, and the glut of oil on the markets means that even production cuts could take many months to have any real effect on oil prices.

Stanley Millgram's torture experiment.

Air travel hasn't ground to a halt during the pandemic, of course, with somewhere between 20 and 25% of flights still operating.

The conclusive proof is sanity or civility is but theater, designed to suit a set of circumstances wherein the individual hopes to acquire material gain, or what they define as material gain.

But nobody knows what the air travel industry is going to look like once the present crisis has subsided.

However all vested interest in a demonstration of sanity becomes irrelevant the moment our life is threatened,

There are likely to be fewer airlines, operating smaller fleets.

Jean Paul Sartre called it mauvais foi, bad faith, therefore all sanity is based on deception, in the service of the self-preservation instinct.

So many scenarios are possible, ranging from significant passenger reluctance to fly, down to a surge in demand as people rediscover their love of flying and go back to borrowing money they can't afford to repay.

The belief that sanity is possible in a world filled with chaos, is madness by definition, since in chaos sanity has no role because if it did have a role, there would no longer be any chaos, by definition.

We just don't know.

In abandoning such an instinct (self-preservation) we can volunteer for a true madness, which is indeed closer to sanity then sanity in a world of either order or chaos, but to do this we would have to believe we have the free will to overcome such a basic instinct, which, of course, is madness.

One thing we can be sure of, though, is that the "new normal" is going to be significantly different to the "old normal" in many ways.

Local time: 01:53

But we just don't know which ways.

Other political goals

Maybe things will calm down once effective vaccines become widely available, for example with air travel (or maybe any travel) restricted to passengers with a valid vaccination certificate or an official medical waiver certificate.

Brian Joyce wrote:

As you point out in your excellent post, the deal will take some time to filter into the market, but THEY (that is Trump, Putin, King of saude) should of known this weeks ago.

Which would drive the antivaxxers crazy, of course, but that would be a positive side-effect

They cannot do their oil sums, never mind pandemic sums.

In a mad world, only the mad are sane.

I must admit grave doubts as to our respective governments in dealing with this crisis, and my firm belief that it has been either vastly overestimated, or underestimated.

Thank you Robin

Putin is many things, but he's not what in Scotland (I'm Scots/Irish) we call a "numpty".

I mentioned the oil price because in his Sunday address, D Trump talked about a deal between him, Putin and a saudi king.

Neither is the House of Saud.

The deal being to cut all production to stabilize the oil price.

So that leaves just one of the three you mention, our very own Plague President, Desperate Don.

Despite this, despite three of the most powerful people in the world making a deal it still did not work.

The "deal" is worth as much POTUS's "deal" with the North Koreans, i.e., a couple of minutes of prime time TV, no more than that.

As you point out in your excellent post, the deal will take some time to filter into the market, but THEY (that is Trump, Putin, King of saude) should of known this weeks ago.

Putin's present goal is to destroy the U.S. shale industry.

Therefore my question returns as, how can such mismanagement get us out of the current crisis?

The Saudis are secretly happy to see this as a side-effect of their price war with the Russians.

They cannot do their oil sums, never mind pandemic sums.

As things stand today, Putin is likely to be successful.

In a mad world, only the mad are sane.

Shale oil producers need a price north of about $55 to make a profit, so they're all screaming in severe pain and slowly but surely shutting up shop.

I must admit grave doubts as to our respective governments in dealing with this crisis, and my firm belief that it has been either vastly overestimated, or underestimated.

Of course the U.S. government is looking to bail them out, but it doesn't look like much money has flowed yet.

I guess when the experts in the oil market can’t get it right, and the experts in epidemiology can’t agree on what’s best, we can’t really expect cockwombles like Putin and Trump to be right on top of it either?

After all, this is an industry that benefits from massive tax breaks in the first place.

(Note to ProZ police:

That isn’t political; it’s fact.)

When times are good, the oil industry pays few taxes, and when times are bad, it goes running to government for handouts.

page-20

Sound familiar?

Local time: 08:53

It's also worth remembering that, whereas both Putin and the Saudis play a long game of chess, POTUS plays with the TV remote.

Wednesday 22 April

If you can lay your hands on an empty oil tanker, you can probably find producers here in the U.S. who will pay you to fill it to the brim.

Apr 22

Then just park it out the way somewhere quiet and safe and wait till oil prices recover.

Deaths up again, only around 30 more than the day before, but still rather depressing.

PS: Oil prices rose today, slightly, on the news that President Trump ordered the U.S. Navy to "shoot down" Iranian gunboats.

“Government steps back in the wake of chaotic handling, and will now allow children out for walks”, rants the headline.

Presuming that the U.S. Navy doesn't want to start a hard shooting war at a time when Covid-19 is sweeping through its ships (the Pentagon appears to have classified Covid-19 infections in the military as a national secret to be swept under the carpet, which is why the Teddy Roosevelt's captain went public), that will allow them to shoot into the air and then tell the President that they forced the gunboats to stop flying.

Only once a day, with one parent, and only for a certain distance.

Doubts

Obviously everyone has a different opinion.

A classic, but it seems that he manipulated the data.

I don’t think it’s a great idea just yet, but then I don’t have sprogs running around the house all day long, and then again I can understand the people I know who can’t wait.

Maciek Drobka

The sub-article goes on:

Poland

“Tributes flood in as local translator has lockdown birthday.

Speaking to an empty silent street shortly after the church bells struck twelve last night, from the balcony of his flat in central Bilbao where he is spending his confinement,

English to Polish

Mr Henderson conveyed his gratitude for kind words and best wishes at this difficult time, and …”

Instinct vs free will

I can’t quote the rest because I don’t want to overwhelm you with emotion.

(...)

Suffice it to say I’ll never see 39 again.

As a non-native speaker of English, I assume I may have missed some of your point.

However, I do believe humans have the free will to overcome the self-preservation instinct, as shown by numerous examples of people who chose to give their lives to save others.

Better go out and get some plonk.

Defiance to authority

And a nice bit of hake, sssh.

Most of the subjects (56 percent) were defiant and at some point refused to continue administering the electric shocks.

After I’ve done a bit of trudging through 3K of blaargh …

The above quote of the unpublished data concerning Stanley Milgram's electric shock experiment only proves what I've been saying, their defiance is a demonstration of their madness, their insane desire to upset order.

@Chris.

Cockwomble, now there's one to note down.

Long is the shadow of the Wombles of Wimbledon Common.

And the manipulation of the data is a demonstration of Milgram's madness, and determination to aggrandize himself in front of his peers to satisfy his insane egotistical pathology.

Local time: 07:53

An example of which we can see in the actions of Putin and Trump and the Chinese communist party hell bent on driving humanity to destruction in order to win a trade war.

In this chaotic and apocalyptic setting only the insane can hope to survive, thereby proving the sanity of madness.

I believe it's too early

If you want to put your free will to good use, dig a huge hole in your back garden and fill it with barrels of oil.

Portugal is also preparing to gradually lift some lockdown restrictions on May like small neighbourhood shops, hairdressers and childcare centres likely to be the first services to re-open.

Friday 24 April- Vicarious Friday

I wonder what "strategies" will childcare assistants use for a "new behaviour management" with young children and toddlers?

Apr 24

Michael Wetzel

One big cafuffle coming up in Spain with the kids being allowed out for walkies and/or shopping.

Long-time reader, first-time writer.

Oh, that ‘and/or’. It still slips in sometimes.

Thank you and happy birthday!

But at least I’m only writing it, and when I say it I don’t say ‘and-stroke-or’.

In a mad world, only the mad are sane.

I must admit grave doubts as to our respective governments in dealing with this crisis, and my firm belief that it has been either vastly overestimated, or underestimated.

As I was saying.

Kids in supermarkets.

It reminds me of Jenny Forbes’ comment right near the beginning of this thread, way back, about the little girl licking all the products in Boot’s.

No, no, even in a mad world, most of the mad are also mad, it's just that all of the sane are mad.

Well, you just imagine all those kids who’ve been holed up for over a month, just dying to get down there and get their little mitts crawling with corona all over everything.

Or, to put it more clearly and simply:

After Sunday, when the ban’s lifted, I for one will be avoiding the patter of tiny feet like the plague.

Given a mad world, in which m = mad and s = sane and the following premises apply: P1: s OR m P2: IF s THEN m

Oh yes, The Dentist - continued.

In an unusual and implausible scenario which makes little sense, but really what do you expect here, this next bit was diverted by a fictitious moderator from Ermelie’s Vicarious Trauma thread.

Didn’t want to hijack her quite so far: … ... Oh, it might have been the pigtails.

The pop-socks.

The push-up bra straining against my forearm, I don’t know.

Or all the pouting and inappropriate innuendo: “Ooh, you’re going to drill me again today, aren’t you, Mr Thorpe?

It is true that you have to be mad to be sane:

- “Oh, that big tool of yours in my mouth again, I’ll have to rinse out for ages afterwards, you naughty man”.

IF NOT m THEN s (P1) 2. IF NOT m THEN m (P1+P2)

Therefore: IF NOT m THEN NOT s

I’m only a dentist, I’m not made of stone.

But I fell for it.

Just the once, I thought.

Just the once.

With a bit of luck she might not even remember after the laughing gas. But she remembered all right.

And what did she do?

Alternatively, you obviously can't be sane and sane, because that directly violates P2.

She only posted it all on Facebook, the silly cow.

And I lost it all before you could say “Local schoolgirl to have dentist’s baby.”

My practice.

My wife.

My kids.

My everything.

And here I am in a B&B in Margate, eating my last meal of battered sausages and mushy peas, with extra gravy.

Time to throw that noose over the roof beam, I suppose.

One more for the statistics.

It’s true what they say about dental pressure.

However, there is nothing to prevent someone from being mad and mad.

Actually, back on the Wet Rock in the 90s (this next bit’s true), my dad’s dentist got up to that kind of thing, only he was jailed for it. Well, not just for that.

It was only later that they found out he’d done a bit of the dentist’s chair malarkey.

No, the main misdemeanour was teaming up with his lover to murder her husband.

And his wife too, within hours of each other.

And then putting both of them in a car with a tube connected to the exhaust pipe, surrounded by photos of the children, like THEY were the secret lovers and had made a suicide pact because THEY couldn’t be together.

But the most amazing thing of all was that he got away with it for 20 years, and was only arrested because his conscience got to him, and he walked into a police station to give himself up.

Not the Northern Ireland police force’s finest hour.

A dreadful affair. Good job dad died before it all came to light, because he thought this bloke was a fine man. See the Colin Howell case.

It's roughly the same issue as when you got mixed up along the lines of "If I'm going to lack substance, I might as well at least make sure to lack polish."

Cookery Friday

PS: I apologize if I messed something up.

It has been almost two-and-a-half decades since I took a symbolic logic course to fulfill my general education requirement in math without taking a real math course.

I clean forgot about this, but on the other hand I'm not on a contract here, so here it is:

PPS: I apologize for not being able to work in an "s AND m". PPPS:

Clams in green sauce

By the way, while we're on the topic, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" is a wonderful book - I enjoyed the film, but the book is much better and much more to the point.

(@Christel - there must be somewhere you can get clams, surely.

Madness = sanity + mortality

Please don't use bacon ☺☺☺)

Thank you for your contribution Micheal, the fr

Ingredients for 4:

agility of the claim of sanity has been exposed by numerous psychologist's over the years, note;

24 medium-calibre clams

Stanford prison experiment,

2 red pepper seeds

Stanley Millgram's torture experiment.

3/4 cloves of garlic

The conclusive proof is sanity or civility is but theater, designed to suit a set of circumstances wherein the individual hopes to acquire material gain, or what they define as material gain.

Quite a bit of parsley

However all vested interest in a demonstration of sanity becomes irrelevant the moment our life is threatened,

Heaped tablespoon of flour

Jean Paul Sartre called it mauvais foi, bad faith, therefore all sanity is based on deception, in the service of the self-preservation instinct.

White wine (cheap cooking stuff, although a finger of extra dry Martini will do as well) Fish stock (water and fish stock cube, ssssshhhhh)

The belief that sanity is possible in a world filled with chaos, is madness by definition, since in chaos sanity has no role because if it did have a role, there would no longer be any chaos, by definition.

Put the clams in tepid water for 15 minutes, drain, and keep them on standby.

In abandoning such an instinct (self-preservation) we can volunteer for a true madness, which is indeed closer to sanity then sanity in a world of either order or chaos, but to do this we would have to believe we have the free will to overcome such a basic instinct, which, of course, is madness.

Best to start the whole cooking process about 45 minutes from serving, to let the clams wallow in all that green gunk for a while. This is really just a variation on the “fish soup” from a previous occasion, except this time the sauce is green, not orange.

Local time: 01:53

In a fish casserole pan, heat chopped garlic with chopped parsley and the pepper seeds in olive oil for a few minutes. Have the stock hot and ready on standby.

Other political goals

Pour in a finger or two of wine/Martini, stir, and wait a few minutes until the alcohol has evaporated. How do you know when it’s evaporated?

Brian Joyce wrote: As you point out in your excellent post, the deal will take some time to filter into the market, but THEY (that is Trump, Putin, King of saude) should of known this weeks ago.

When you can’t smell alcohol any more, of course. So best not to be drinking yourself as you do this.

They cannot do their oil sums, never mind pandemic sums. In a mad world, only the mad are sane. I must admit grave doubts as to our respective governments in dealing with this crisis, and my firm belief that it has been either vastly overestimated, or underestimated.

Then you sprinkle in the flour and use a wooden spoon to blend it in.

Putin is many things, but he's not what in Scotland (I'm Scots/Irish) we call a "numpty".

Don’t panic as it starts to form unsightly floury lumps, it’s all going to be OK, just as long as you immediately add the stock little by little and keep stirring as you shake the pan backwards and forwards.

Neither is the House of Saud.

Might be a good time to take out the pepper seeds just before this, especially if you’ve been crushing them in the pan. You can keep adding the stock and keep stirring until it thickens and the lumps will eventually disappear and turn into the green sauce.

So that leaves just one of the three you mention, our very own Plague President, Desperate Don.

Then you throw in the clams, stirring and adding stock (continue to add the stock gradually – you don’t want the sauce to be too thin because you’ve put in too much, and - in my experience anyway - it’s a bad idea to try to rectify with more flour and stock later), and the clams open up meanwhile in the heat of the green sauce. Not much need for cutlery to eat them, either.

The "deal" is worth as much POTUS's "deal" with the North Koreans, i.e., a couple of minutes of prime time TV, no more than that.

You can scoop the clams out with a fork if you like, but the sauce is simply slurped up from one of those empty clam shells.

Putin's present goal is to destroy the U.S. shale industry.

I’m outta here. Been biffed with 6K for Tuesday, so bang goes the beach.

The Saudis are secretly happy to see this as a side-effect of their price war with the Russians.

Monday 27 April

As things stand today, Putin is likely to be successful.

Apr 27

Shale oil producers need a price north of about $55 to make a profit, so they're all screaming in severe pain and slowly but surely shutting up shop.

They’ve gone back to putting yesterday’s death toll on the front page now.

Of course the U.S. government is looking to bail them out, but it doesn't look like much money has flowed yet.

Only 288 deaths in Spain in 24 hours.

After all, this is an industry that benefits from massive tax breaks in the first place.

I say only, because it peaked at 950 on or around 20 March, and that was after a whole week of confinement, so we seem to be getting somewhere rather than nowhere.

When times are good, the oil industry pays few taxes, and when times are bad, it goes running to government for handouts.

But you never know, especially since the streets were alive with shrill little voices yesterday as the under-14s were finally allowed out to play, but no touching or talking with their little friends, mind.

Sound familiar?

And only for an hour.

It's also worth remembering that, whereas both Putin and the Saudis play a long game of chess, POTUS plays with the TV remote.

And strictly local, only a kilometre from home, and definitely no cars to be used either.

If you can lay your hands on an empty oil tanker, you can probably find producers here in the U.S. who will pay you to fill it to the brim.

Pressure from parental associations various won the day in the end.

Then just park it out the way somewhere quiet and safe and wait till oil prices recover.

I can’t be the only one thinking deaths are going to rise again shortly, can I?

PS: Oil prices rose today, slightly, on the news that President Trump ordered the U.S. Navy to "shoot down" Iranian gunboats.

Just as I was thinking that, in the event of an emergency, hospitals should be less chaotic now.

Presuming that the U.S. Navy doesn't want to start a hard shooting war at a time when Covid-19 is sweeping through its ships (the Pentagon appears to have classified Covid-19 infections in the military as a national secret to be swept under the carpet, which is why the Teddy Roosevelt's captain went public), that will allow them to shoot into the air and then tell the President that they forced the gunboats to stop flying.

At least one of them has an intensive care unit with hardly anybody there now.

Doubts

Tuesday 28 April

A classic, but it seems that he manipulated the data.

Apr 28

Maciek Drobka

Deaths up slightly to 331 yesterday, and the little experiment at the weekend of letting the kids out won't be helping in the short to medium term either.

Poland

Both parents out with the kids (only one allowed at a time), children playing with their friends (no interfamily mingling allowed), families out for hours at a time (only one hour allowed), people miles away from their homes (only one kilometre).

English to Polish

Stricter measures have been announced for the long 1 May weekend coming up.

Instinct vs free will

Talk of staggering outings by districts, and talk of staggering outings for the elderly and for children.

(...)

Oh, and as of 2 May there's a general freebie for everyone, so they can all go out - adults, children, grannies and grandads, walking, running, dogs, sheep, the lot (I say sheep because someone was fined down in Marbella recently for taking one for a walk through the town).

As a non-native speaker of English, I assume I may have missed some of your point. However, I do believe humans have the free will to overcome the self-preservation instinct, as shown by numerous examples of people who chose to give their lives to save others.

Not too encouraging.

Defiance to authority

Hopefully I'll have a shedload of work to do at the weekend, or else I'll paint the house or something, but it seems like a bad idea to go out.

Most of the subjects (56 percent) were defiant and at some point refused to continue administering the electric shocks.

We will wake up in the morning from this nightmare soon!

The above quote of the unpublished data concerning Stanley Milgram's electric shock experiment only proves what I've been saying, their defiance is a demonstration of their madness, their insane desire to upset order.

Spain’s schools are not expected to reopen until September is one of the measures I agree with

And the manipulation of the data is a demonstration of Milgram's madness, and determination to aggrandize himself in front of his peers to satisfy his insane egotistical pathology.

(Portugal is doing the opposite: the country wants to reopen nursery schools and universities).

An example of which we can see in the actions of Putin and Trump and the Chinese communist party hell bent on driving humanity to destruction in order to win a trade war. In this chaotic and apocalyptic setting only the insane can hope to survive, thereby proving the sanity of madness.

I hope this preparation of Spain, Italy, France, Portugal, UK, etc. to gradually ease the restrictions of their lockdown do not rise the number of infections and deaths.

If you want to put your free will to good use, dig a huge hole in your back garden and fill it with barrels of oil.

The death toll curve is flattening over these last days, and it is true we need to get out of this economic hibernation.

Friday 24 April- Vicarious Friday

But, if we continue to be cautious and comply with the new measures, we can stop or minimize the pandemic.

Apr 24

(I don't like restrictions in my life, but I need to follow the rules if I want to protect myself and others).

One big cafuffle coming up in Spain with the kids being allowed out for walkies and/or shopping.

On the other hand, we need to rely on science (to get a vaccine and/or a treatment) as the key to exit this pandemic/economic crisis.

Oh, that ‘and/or’. It still slips in sometimes.

With technological/scientific development, time, patience, "self-education", and hope we will get back to our normal lives.

But at least I’m only writing it, and when I say it I don’t say ‘and-stroke-or’.

Soon, we will wake up in the morning from this nightmare and see coronavirus was gone!!

As I was saying. Kids in supermarkets. It reminds me of Jenny Forbes’ comment right near the beginning of this thread, way back, about the little girl licking all the products in Boot’s.

Wednesday 29 April

Well, you just imagine all those kids who’ve been holed up for over a month, just dying to get down there and get their little mitts crawling with corona all over everything.

Apr 29

After Sunday, when the ban’s lifted, I for one will be avoiding the patter of tiny feet like the plague.

The good news is that deaths are down to 301 from 331 the day before, but that’s still more than the 288 two days ago.

Oh yes, The Dentist - continued. In an unusual and implausible scenario which makes little sense, but really what do you expect here, this next bit was diverted by a fictitious moderator from Ermelie’s Vicarious Trauma thread. Didn’t want to hijack her quite so far: … ... Oh, it might have been the pigtails. The pop-socks. The push-up bra straining against my forearm, I don’t know. Or all the pouting and inappropriate innuendo: “Ooh, you’re going to drill me again today, aren’t you, Mr Thorpe?

We’re told that the effects of the start of a gradual de-lockdown which kicked off with kids and parents on Sunday won’t be known for some 12 days.

- “Oh, that big tool of yours in my mouth again, I’ll have to rinse out for ages afterwards, you naughty man”.

Which, I suppose, means until any contagions occurring during that period develop into The Symptoms, and we’re back to square one and it’s time to think again.

I’m only a dentist, I’m not made of stone. But I fell for it. Just the once, I thought. Just the once. With a bit of luck she might not even remember after the laughing gas. But she remembered all right. And what did she do?

But then, I’m not a lockdown expert like the people on the telly.

She only posted it all on Facebook, the silly cow. And I lost it all before you could say “Local schoolgirl to have dentist’s baby.” My practice. My wife. My kids. My everything. And here I am in a B&B in Margate, eating my last meal of battered sausages and mushy peas, with extra gravy. Time to throw that noose over the roof beam, I suppose. One more for the statistics. It’s true what they say about dental pressure.

Or psychologists explaining that people get bored and frustrated and sad and, depending on their circumstances, economically worse off when confined against their will. Do you know, I hadn’t thought of it like that.

Actually, back on the Wet Rock in the 90s (this next bit’s true), my dad’s dentist got up to that kind of thing, only he was jailed for it. Well, not just for that. It was only later that they found out he’d done a bit of the dentist’s chair malarkey. No, the main misdemeanour was teaming up with his lover to murder her husband. And his wife too, within hours of each other. And then putting both of them in a car with a tube connected to the exhaust pipe, surrounded by photos of the children, like THEY were the secret lovers and had made a suicide pact because THEY couldn’t be together. But the most amazing thing of all was that he got away with it for 20 years, and was only arrested because his conscience got to him, and he walked into a police station to give himself up. Not the Northern Ireland police force’s finest hour. A dreadful affair. Good job dad died before it all came to light, because he thought this bloke was a fine man. See the Colin Howell case.

But don’t fret, there’s a plan.

Cookery Friday

Quite a complicated plan, too, by provinces and in phases.

I clean forgot about this, but on the other hand I'm not on a contract here, so here it is:

They have it in the paper today, a huge table of whats and wheres and whos and do’s and don’ts and mights on a full page.

Clams in green sauce

Phase 0 (it’s always more exciting to start with 0 rather than

(@Christel - there must be somewhere you can get clams, surely.

1) starts this weekend, and small businesses such as hairdressing salons and a few others will be allowed to open, but with one third of the usual capacity and by appointment only.

Please don't use bacon ☺☺☺)

All this will develop into Phases 1, 2 and 3, downscaling confinement more and more (“desescalada” is the word of the moment here), eventually even allowing people to travel between provinces, up to the end of June, by when it looks like you can do anything you want, as long as you have a mask and gloves and it doesn’t involve a crowd of people.

Ingredients for 4:

And school’s out, too, but only until September, not forever, as Alice seems to think:

24 medium-calibre clams

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcVEhtojXlc

2 red pepper seeds

I think we are on the right track

3/4 cloves of garlic

WHO laid out six criteria in order to guide countries lifting restrictions:

Quite a bit of parsley

Contagion is controlled;

Heaped tablespoon of flour

Test, isolate, and treat every case and trace every contact by health authorities;

White wine (cheap cooking stuff, although a finger of extra dry Martini will do as well) Fish stock (water and fish stock cube, ssssshhhhh)

3.

Put the clams in tepid water for 15 minutes, drain, and keep them on standby.

Outbreak risks are minimized in certain settings;

Best to start the whole cooking process about 45 minutes from serving, to let the clams wallow in all that green gunk for a while. This is really just a variation on the “fish soup” from a previous occasion, except this time the sauce is green, not orange.

4.

In a fish casserole pan, heat chopped garlic with chopped parsley and the pepper seeds in olive oil for a few minutes. Have the stock hot and ready on standby.

Preventive measures are in place in workplaces, schools, and other essential places;

Pour in a finger or two of wine/Martini, stir, and wait a few minutes until the alcohol has evaporated. How do you know when it’s evaporated?

5.

When you can’t smell alcohol any more, of course. So best not to be drinking yourself as you do this.

Importation cases managed;

Then you sprinkle in the flour and use a wooden spoon to blend it in.

6.

Don’t panic as it starts to form unsightly floury lumps, it’s all going to be OK, just as long as you immediately add the stock little by little and keep stirring as you shake the pan backwards and forwards.

Communities are fully educated, engaged and empowered to adjust to the new norm.

Might be a good time to take out the pepper seeds just before this, especially if you’ve been crushing them in the pan. You can keep adding the stock and keep stirring until it thickens and the lumps will eventually disappear and turn into the green sauce.

https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19--13-april-2020

Then you throw in the clams, stirring and adding stock (continue to add the stock gradually – you don’t want the sauce to be too thin because you’ve put in too much, and - in my experience anyway - it’s a bad idea to try to rectify with more flour and stock later), and the clams open up meanwhile in the heat of the green sauce. Not much need for cutlery to eat them, either.

I think we are on the right track.

You can scoop the clams out with a fork if you like, but the sauce is simply slurped up from one of those empty clam shells.

Time to be wiser, more cautious, and really careful in our daily interactions, even more than before.

I’m outta here. Been biffed with 6K for Tuesday, so bang goes the beach.

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page21.html

Monday 27 April

orona quarantine diary

Apr 27

Local time: 13:26

They’ve gone back to putting yesterday’s death toll on the front page now.

Thursday 30 April

Only 288 deaths in Spain in 24 hours.

Apr 30

I say only, because it peaked at 950 on or around 20 March, and that was after a whole week of confinement, so we seem to be getting somewhere rather than nowhere.

And, wait for it, deaths are up again in Spain.

But you never know, especially since the streets were alive with shrill little voices yesterday as the under-14s were finally allowed out to play, but no touching or talking with their little friends, mind.

Only a few dozen, and obviously not due to the tentative beginnings of downscaling yet, but just you wait.

And only for an hour.

I’m still tootling along here with a bit of a work downscaling myself, but nothing suicidal yet, and a while before I have to dig into my savings.

And strictly local, only a kilometre from home, and definitely no cars to be used either.

That, or a life of crime.

Pressure from parental associations various won the day in the end.

Never too late to start, especially as there’ll be a lot of people with no prospects out on the streets with nothing to lose, a-thugging and a-mugging.

I can’t be the only one thinking deaths are going to rise again shortly, can I?

Al Capone was a mild-mannered kid who did errands for da mob now and again, until he got scarfaced tending a bar and gangstered up, realising that crime does pay and that mild manners get you nowhere among all the wise guys. I was about to write “And no tax to pay, either” here, but then that’s what they sent Al down for in the end.

Just as I was thinking that, in the event of an emergency, hospitals should be less chaotic now.

But understand I’m keeping it under wraps, so schtoom, geddit?

At least one of them has an intensive care unit with hardly anybody there now.

Mum’s the word.

Tuesday 28 April

Don’t even think about it, don’t force my hand. I know where you all hang out, see.

Apr 28

I seriously considered this when I was half the age I am now, so about halfway through uni. I thought that, if you could find a way (and you couldn’t do it so easily then, but look at the possibilities now …) of getting some IT geek to set off a bank’s alarm past closing time in some way, what happens?

Deaths up slightly to 331 yesterday, and the little experiment at the weekend of letting the kids out won't be helping in the short to medium term either.

The cops turn up, run through the joint, find nothing’s amiss, and they all go away again. I’m pretty sure this was done in a film, but they stole the idea from me.

Both parents out with the kids (only one allowed at a time), children playing with their friends (no interfamily mingling allowed), families out for hours at a time (only one hour allowed), people miles away from their homes (only one kilometre).

The next day your geek does the same, and then two days later the same. After the third or fourth time, sure, they might turn up, but all they do now is have the manager turn off the alarm.

Stricter measures have been announced for the long 1 May weekend coming up.

Then in you go, under cover of darkness and with malice aforethought, and set off the alarm, but it doesn’t matter because the rozzers are tired of it by now, and the manager has even switched off the alarm for you, except now you’re inside waiting for him to do it. You break into the vault with the geek, and Bob’s your uncle. Of course, the geek’s a liability, because he might squeal, and even if he doesn’t, you have to share the loot with him, so you get rid of him sharpish when he thinks he’s meeting you for his share, and he gets a shallow grave for his troubles.

Talk of staggering outings by districts, and talk of staggering outings for the elderly and for children.

These days the IT geek hacks the system and sends all the money to the Bahamas. Either way, got to keep in with the IT geeks. I think I’ll give mine a bell.

Oh, and as of 2 May there's a general freebie for everyone, so they can all go out - adults, children, grannies and grandads, walking, running, dogs, sheep, the lot (I say sheep because someone was fined down in Marbella recently for taking one for a walk through the town).

And this is when you find out...

Not too encouraging.

That banks have a silent alarm too and a vault that only opens at certain hours and with a countdown of 3 hours

Hopefully I'll have a shedload of work to do at the weekend, or else I'll paint the house or something, but it seems like a bad idea to go out.

Friday 1 May

We will wake up in the morning from this nightmare soon!

May 1

Spain’s schools are not expected to reopen until September is one of the measures I agree with

There won’t be the usual demos in Bilbao this year to celebrate 1 May.

(Portugal is doing the opposite: the country wants to reopen nursery schools and universities).

What they will do, and I haven’t heard this, but I’m just imagining it, is to do it from the balconies, so expect a lot of flag-waving this evening. Or maybe before. The balcony applause has finally been manipulated, no surprises there, and we have been receiving “instructions” on social media for special issues. It’s no longer just applause for healthcare workers, police etc. I reckon people working the check-outs at supermarkets are worth an applause, too, so I always make a point of giving them some encouragement as I pay them. Has anyone else noticed, though, that prices at supermarkets have gone up?

I hope this preparation of Spain, Italy, France, Portugal, UK, etc. to gradually ease the restrictions of their lockdown do not rise the number of infections and deaths.

Twice now I’ve paid around 100 euros for more or less the usual stuff, maybe with the odd pack of gloves here and there, but it used to only set me back 60 or 70, giving me a 10 or 20 euro discount for next time. The fruit and veg shop too. Difficult times?

The death toll curve is flattening over these last days, and it is true we need to get out of this economic hibernation.

Production problems?

But, if we continue to be cautious and comply with the new measures, we can stop or minimize the pandemic.

Whatever. Just pass the cost on to Joe Public.

(I don't like restrictions in my life, but I need to follow the rules if I want to protect myself and others).

But those instructions. From everywhere, too. From associations and federations and groups and foundations. Sometimes you hear about them at the last minute. There are also instructions for saucepan-banging against the monarchy (the only one I respond to), instructions for no applause tonight, just a silent vigil because someone died, and there may be a few more I haven’t heard about yet. Last night the applause caught me just as I was heading for my door, but I noticed, going down a street that I wouldn’t normally see at that time from home, that there were few people out on the balconies. Maybe people are getting tired of clapping, not clapping, candles, all that. I certainly am. Disillusion setting in.

On the other hand, we need to rely on science (to get a vaccine and/or a treatment) as the key to exit this pandemic/economic crisis.

And it doesn’t improve my mood to hear (constantly) about pressure on the government to respect civil rights and start reactivating the economy (I reiterate that I’m not a socialist) from the cunts, yes cunts, the smarmy bastards who don’t give a toss about the people, bugger the country, in fact, whose only objective is for it to fail, now means that this weekend we all gaily go out to infect each other. Which will help the cunts, because then they can say it was all improvised … terrible management … you lie about the figures … putting our brave people at risk … a nation left helpless … shame on you … we would of did it much more better etc.

With technological/scientific development, time, patience, "self-education", and hope we will get back to our normal lives.

Bad day, sorry. Better get my invoices done.

Soon, we will wake up in the morning from this nightmare and see coronavirus was gone!!

Hommage to Catalonia

Wednesday 29 April

Mervyn quick while there is time read this book and storm the barricades!!!!

Apr 29

Or if you are still feeling down I recommend "The road to Wigan pier" a classic.

The good news is that deaths are down to 301 from 331 the day before, but that’s still more than the 288 two days ago.

Local time: 06:26

We’re told that the effects of the start of a gradual de-lockdown which kicked off with kids and parents on Sunday won’t be known for some 12 days.

American irony

Which, I suppose, means until any contagions occurring during that period develop into The Symptoms, and we’re back to square one and it’s time to think again.

Mervyn,

But then, I’m not a lockdown expert like the people on the telly.

Never let it be said that Murricans don't understand irony.

Or psychologists explaining that people get bored and frustrated and sad and, depending on their circumstances, economically worse off when confined against their will. Do you know, I hadn’t thought of it like that.

Many of the armed pro-death protestors at various state capitols in the US are also pro-life. Go figure...

But don’t fret, there’s a plan.

Saturday 2 May

Quite a complicated plan, too, by provinces and in phases.

May 2

They have it in the paper today, a huge table of whats and wheres and whos and do’s and don’ts and mights on a full page.

I was out running this morning as an addition to the morning exercise routine. You’re allowed to from 6 to 10 am, if you’re not a child or a senior citizen. They have the 10 to 1 slot, I think. I can also do this from 7 pm, but back home by 11 pm or off to bed with no supper. As some joker asked on the news last night, who gets the 11 pm to 6 am slot?

Phase 0 (it’s always more exciting to start with 0 rather than

Out running doesn’t mean you can run just anywhere, though. I would preferably do it down by the river, but that’s a little outside the kilometre limit, and more so the more you run, unless you run for a few minutes and then turn round again, but then you might as well do that around here, so that’s what I did, round and round the same block. I’m buggered if I’m getting a fine for being off limits down by the riverside, since apparently they check your home address. Only saw a couple of other runners.

1) starts this weekend, and small businesses such as hairdressing salons and a few others will be allowed to open, but with one third of the usual capacity and by appointment only.

I was wrong about yesterday, because it wasn’t so much balconies as cars here to mark 1 May. Usually at election time the parties go out in cars bedecked with flags and posters blaring out their message, and that’s what the unions did this time. About twenty cars came up this street, but not much else.

All this will develop into Phases 1, 2 and 3, downscaling confinement more and more (“desescalada” is the word of the moment here), eventually even allowing people to travel between provinces, up to the end of June, by when it looks like you can do anything you want, as long as you have a mask and gloves and it doesn’t involve a crowd of people.

I’ve read Homage to Catalonia a couple of times, a great insight into Barcelona during the Civil War, the only place Orwell had ever been where the working class was "in the saddle”, as he puts it in the book.

And school’s out, too, but only until September, not forever, as Alice seems to think:

Trouble was, the working class didn’t know how to handle being in the saddle, there or anywhere in Spain, so they just started arguing and fighting among themselves. As if it wasn’t enough that Orwell got himself shot up in action, in the end he had to leg it across the border to France before he got himself executed, but by the same side he’d been fighting for.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcVEhtojXlc

All thanks to Stalin. Old Joe was a bit of a stirrer. He even executed his own officers who’d been working for him in Spain once they got back to Russia, just in case they blabbed.

I think we are on the right track

How could Franco lose, with all the infighting going on in Barcelona and elsewhere?

WHO laid out six criteria in order to guide countries lifting restrictions:

No surprise, either, that Orwell wrote books like Animal Farm and 1984 afterwards.

Contagion is controlled;

I haven’t read The Road to Wigan Pier yet, but I will.

Test, isolate, and treat every case and trace every contact by health authorities;

I imagine it's full of all that shiny happy proletariat idealism he saw torn up in front of him a few years later in Barcelona.

3.

Local time: 12:26

Outbreak risks are minimized in certain settings;

Clap

4.

When all this moist-eyed "clap for the NHS" stuff began several weeks ago now it occurred to me that giving someone a clap used to mean something quite different when I was alive.

Preventive measures are in place in workplaces, schools, and other essential places;

Clappy-happy people

5.

Getting the clap certainly has its down side.

Importation cases managed;

Riddle of the masks

6.

Irony is the intelligent response to hypocrisy. If I wear a mask, I am flattening the death curve, so why not de-confine with masks and flatten the unemployment curve, or if the masks don't work why waste time with them at all (I have never worn a mask, yet). Why are people allowed to go to work, but not the beach?

Communities are fully educated, engaged and empowered to adjust to the new norm.

Another hypocrisy, why are the large super market's open, but not the small holder, this is the crushing of the independent enterprise by the multi national in hand with puppet government. In a little while the only people that will have any money will be Bill Gates the Chinese Communist party and that cross eyed freakshow Jeff Bezoz. Brave new world

https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19--13-april-2020

Kevin Fulton

I think we are on the right track.

Local time: 07:26

Time to be wiser, more cautious, and really careful in our daily interactions, even more than before.

Laye-stage capitalism

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page21.html

Why are people allowed to go to work, but not the beach?

orona quarantine diary

Another hypocrisy, why are the large super market's open, but not the small holder

Local time: 13:26

Late-stage capitalism requires human sacrifice in order to survive.

Thursday 30 April

Human sacrifice

Apr 30

That's a lot of lambs to be sacrificed. But then lambs are just young sheep, and the powers-that-be will always need sheep. And talking of sheep, here's one about wolves for the weekend. Slightly tangential, but there you go. Lots of lessons to be lurnt here:

And, wait for it, deaths are up again in Spain.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aa2\_Hu2iSM0

Only a few dozen, and obviously not due to the tentative beginnings of downscaling yet, but just you wait.

When deconfining, people are seriously showing signs of shopping addiction May 2

I’m still tootling along here with a bit of a work downscaling myself, but nothing suicidal yet, and a while before I have to dig into my savings.

Why coming an hour before the opening just to be the one in a 200 m long waiting line to enter in an ikea shop?

That, or a life of crime.

Why lining up on the first day in front of a Louis Vitton shop?

Never too late to start, especially as there’ll be a lot of people with no prospects out on the streets with nothing to lose, a-thugging and a-mugging.

Did the people did really miss that much their luxury goods - or less luxurious that they could not order online?

Al Capone was a mild-mannered kid who did errands for da mob now and again, until he got scarfaced tending a bar and gangstered up, realising that crime does pay and that mild manners get you nowhere among all the wise guys. I was about to write “And no tax to pay, either” here, but then that’s what they sent Al down for in the end.

Well only addicted would not wait one or two days more to go shopping if they had to wait for 6 weeks.

But understand I’m keeping it under wraps, so schtoom, geddit?

My son who usually used to enjoy going shopping said he won't go shopping unless necessary because he has to wear a mask, and with a mask it is hard to breath and it is not that enjoyable that much anymore. It seems that the quality of the masks offered is deteriorating now that we have to pay for them in a pack of 50 pieces. Written on it: not fpp1. Well wearing a mask does not seem to be to protect myself then, but to protect the world from me. Well I am so healthy that I will wear gloves?

Mum’s the word.

Why the point of wearing mask if I can infect myself on the tip of my fingers?

Don’t even think about it, don’t force my hand. I know where you all hang out, see.

It seems to be working in a way not to have the illness spreading into the cooling system. I would seriously not think of having to work all day long with a mask and I admire the ones who do. Though it is seen that some cashier do not wear a mask anymore but a plastic helmet. Lets hope for them air does not circulate.

I seriously considered this when I was half the age I am now, so about halfway through uni. I thought that, if you could find a way (and you couldn’t do it so easily then, but look at the possibilities now …) of getting some IT geek to set off a bank’s alarm past closing time in some way, what happens?

We have no beach but some lakes are reopening - the summer will be saved - at least for local residents because every car immatriculation plate not of the neighborhood get suspected as a potential germ bringer. Yesterday I had the first hours-long drive in the last 6 weeks. Are the public toilets desinfected?

The cops turn up, run through the joint, find nothing’s amiss, and they all go away again. I’m pretty sure this was done in a film, but they stole the idea from me.

Did look like that I was the only one going with mask and glove, having to wear a mask my children simply declined the offer until they came back home.

The next day your geek does the same, and then two days later the same. After the third or fourth time, sure, they might turn up, but all they do now is have the manager turn off the alarm.

I remember as a child that one could get germs using public toilets. How far we had come to think that everything we could touch was clinically safe.

Then in you go, under cover of darkness and with malice aforethought, and set off the alarm, but it doesn’t matter because the rozzers are tired of it by now, and the manager has even switched off the alarm for you, except now you’re inside waiting for him to do it. You break into the vault with the geek, and Bob’s your uncle. Of course, the geek’s a liability, because he might squeal, and even if he doesn’t, you have to share the loot with him, so you get rid of him sharpish when he thinks he’s meeting you for his share, and he gets a shallow grave for his troubles.

I do not think a mask is something we will have to get used to. I still hope for meeting and concerts at the end of the year, in that case I would take a one offering more of a protection than a name tag.

These days the IT geek hacks the system and sends all the money to the Bahamas. Either way, got to keep in with the IT geeks. I think I’ll give mine a bell.

Nice that life seems to go back to normal though.

And this is when you find out...

😳

That banks have a silent alarm too and a vault that only opens at certain hours and with a countdown of 3 hours

Jennifer Forbes wrote:

Friday 1 May

Sorry to hear of your demise, Jennifer. Anything we can do to help?

May 1

Or is it a case of needing to keep some silver bullets handy?

There won’t be the usual demos in Bilbao this year to celebrate 1 May.

Sunday 3 May

What they will do, and I haven’t heard this, but I’m just imagining it, is to do it from the balconies, so expect a lot of flag-waving this evening. Or maybe before. The balcony applause has finally been manipulated, no surprises there, and we have been receiving “instructions” on social media for special issues. It’s no longer just applause for healthcare workers, police etc. I reckon people working the check-outs at supermarkets are worth an applause, too, so I always make a point of giving them some encouragement as I pay them. Has anyone else noticed, though, that prices at supermarkets have gone up?

May 3

Twice now I’ve paid around 100 euros for more or less the usual stuff, maybe with the odd pack of gloves here and there, but it used to only set me back 60 or 70, giving me a 10 or 20 euro discount for next time. The fruit and veg shop too. Difficult times?

If the run-up to the weekend was a washout, the weekend proper didn’t start too well either. For reasons too complicated to explain, I wound up in a car mid-afternoon yesterday transporting a carpet. An annoyingly large and dust-filled carpet, too, which I’d just walked down four flights of stairs. I was also carrying a glass dish with liquidy food in a paper bag. As I adjusted the carpet hugged between my chest and my arm, the paper bag in the other hand tore and fell on stone steps outside the house, shattering into a thousand pieces along with the food. Not that I counted the pieces, just cleared them off the steps along with the goo and binned most of it. And so to the car. The carpet being annoyingly large, as I said, it just about fitted in the back seat and I took the passenger seat. As we set off, I could see four police officers across the road leaning against a couple of patrol cars, staring at us (passengers are really supposed to take the back seat). Amid some nonchalant whistling and determinedly looking in any other direction but theirs, we continued, but amid all the nonchalance I only noticed the red light 100 metres further on just as we sailed through it. Just a pedestrian crossing, not a junction, and no pedestrians around, so not a serious red light, but still a red light. After the roundabout outside the Town Hall, a cop car (with the same female cop I’d noticed looking at us as we sailed off) drew up beside us at another red light – they’d been quick off the mark - and asked us to move on and park up on the right.

Production problems?

It was the Ertzaintza, the Basque police, who tend to be reasonable. The Civil Guard and the National Police tend not to be reasonable in Euskadi, and I suppose that’s why the Ertzaintza is left to do the day-to-day stuff. To be fair to the Civil Guard, it’s not actually their fault, because the force was never conceived to be sympathetic or helpful, but rather to inspire fear and respect, and that’s why they’re never posted to their native locations, to discourage any bonhomie or friendliness with people you’ve known all your life.

Whatever. Just pass the cost on to Joe Public.

The two ertzainas just wanted to know what we were doing with two people in the front seats, and when they saw the carpet and also the bags piled on the passenger seat, they just nodded understandingly and said Get in the back seat whatever way you can, and don’t do it again. “We know it’s a pain,” the male cop said, “but let’s not ruin things when we’ve got this far, OK”?

But those instructions. From everywhere, too. From associations and federations and groups and foundations. Sometimes you hear about them at the last minute. There are also instructions for saucepan-banging against the monarchy (the only one I respond to), instructions for no applause tonight, just a silent vigil because someone died, and there may be a few more I haven’t heard about yet. Last night the applause caught me just as I was heading for my door, but I noticed, going down a street that I wouldn’t normally see at that time from home, that there were few people out on the balconies. Maybe people are getting tired of clapping, not clapping, candles, all that. I certainly am. Disillusion setting in.

OK, officer, sir.

And it doesn’t improve my mood to hear (constantly) about pressure on the government to respect civil rights and start reactivating the economy (I reiterate that I’m not a socialist) from the cunts, yes cunts, the smarmy bastards who don’t give a toss about the people, bugger the country, in fact, whose only objective is for it to fail, now means that this weekend we all gaily go out to infect each other. Which will help the cunts, because then they can say it was all improvised … terrible management … you lie about the figures … putting our brave people at risk … a nation left helpless … shame on you … we would of did it much more better etc.

I had to clean this carpet at home too. I took it up another four flights of stairs and vacuumed it three times until the vacuum cleaner wouldn’t take any more fluff and dust and I had to empty the tub. I vacuumed it twice more (and five times more this morning). After round five yesterday afternoon, I went to wash my hands, and in doing so managed to knock a mirror on a stand in the bathroom off its perch. The last bloody straw. Panic gripped me as it fell, but thankfully it fell into the clothes basket. If it had smashed, I’d have thrown a wobbly for sure.

Bad day, sorry. Better get my invoices done.

Out running again this morning, but down by the river this time. My mistake: you can run any distance you like, as long as you give other people a wide berth. It’s annoying to run snorting and puffing through a mask, though.

Hommage to Catalonia

Thanks May 3

Mervyn quick while there is time read this book and storm the barricades!!!!

Thank you for your condolences, Chris. It's nice and warm down here.

Or if you are still feeling down I recommend "The road to Wigan pier" a classic.

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page22.html

Local time: 06:26

Local time: 23:27

American irony

Monday 4 May

Mervyn,

May 4

Never let it be said that Murricans don't understand irony.

Only 168 deaths in Spain yesterday, so it does seem like it’s going down. For the moment. I’m still convinced of the contagion that must ensue from streets beginning to fill with people again, despite all the precautions. Today some small businesses have been allowed to open, too. Hairdressers among them, which I see as particularly dangerous, although they have to have shields and partitions and all the rest in place. I was out running again this morning, and there were a lot of people around with neither gloves nor masks. Time for that second wave any time now.

Many of the armed pro-death protestors at various state capitols in the US are also pro-life. Go figure...

When most of the restrictions have been lifted, we will have reached the “new normality”, to use the official term. Sánchez might not even get Parliament’s say-so to extend the state of alarm, because the moaning minnies never let up, and they’re ever more numerous. I don't think Mr S is doing a fantastic job, but we all know they wouldn't do it any better.

Saturday 2 May

@Jennifer

May 2

You’re on the Isles of Scilly aren’t you, Jennifer?

I was out running this morning as an addition to the morning exercise routine. You’re allowed to from 6 to 10 am, if you’re not a child or a senior citizen. They have the 10 to 1 slot, I think. I can also do this from 7 pm, but back home by 11 pm or off to bed with no supper. As some joker asked on the news last night, who gets the 11 pm to 6 am slot?

Is it life as normal out there with no lockdown?

Out running doesn’t mean you can run just anywhere, though. I would preferably do it down by the river, but that’s a little outside the kilometre limit, and more so the more you run, unless you run for a few minutes and then turn round again, but then you might as well do that around here, so that’s what I did, round and round the same block. I’m buggered if I’m getting a fine for being off limits down by the riverside, since apparently they check your home address. Only saw a couple of other runners.

Local time: 22:27

I was wrong about yesterday, because it wasn’t so much balconies as cars here to mark 1 May. Usually at election time the parties go out in cars bedecked with flags and posters blaring out their message, and that’s what the unions did this time. About twenty cars came up this street, but not much else.

The beginning of a "new normality"...

I’ve read Homage to Catalonia a couple of times, a great insight into Barcelona during the Civil War, the only place Orwell had ever been where the working class was "in the saddle”, as he puts it in the book.

In the neighbour country, if we need to use any of the public services, we should schedule in advance for an in-person appointment. The same goes to hairdressers, beauty salons, barbers, etc. This can be complicated and very time-consuming. Hospital appointments are not postponed anymore. They will follow safe measures to meet patient's needs. (I don't care… I will go on with my long hair for the moment, and I will cancel my medical appointments, and schedule them next year.) Children will attend education and childcare settings, and I suspect they will be more exposed to risks. INESC TEC (Porto Institute for Systems and Computer Engineering, Technology and Science) is creating an app to track contagion networks of Covic-19 (I think it will be very useful; there's a high risk of a relapse in this current month). Restaurants and bars, as well as shopping centers will reopen later. A Portuguese best practice guide will be available to help sectors and people to adopt new safe measures, and to keep follow the old ones. It will still be a while before everything returns to normal, but studies show "everything will be alright" in the coming months, and in December we will be out of this nightmare. Let's hope everyone all over the world regain their "old normality".

Trouble was, the working class didn’t know how to handle being in the saddle, there or anywhere in Spain, so they just started arguing and fighting among themselves. As if it wasn’t enough that Orwell got himself shot up in action, in the end he had to leg it across the border to France before he got himself executed, but by the same side he’d been fighting for.

Chris S. again

All thanks to Stalin. Old Joe was a bit of a stirrer. He even executed his own officers who’d been working for him in Spain once they got back to Russia, just in case they blabbed.

No Chris, I'm not quite that far west, I'm in Penzance, not the Isles of Scilly. I don't know how things are in Scilly but we certainly do have lockdown in Cornwall and (according to the daily bulletins on TV) a lower death rate than the rest of the UK - for now. Cornwall normally lives on tourism but the County Council's new motto is "Don't come to Cornwall". Really friendly. When I said it was nice and warm I was referring to somewhere a bit deeper down ...

How could Franco lose, with all the infighting going on in Barcelona and elsewhere?

Portugal seems to have handled the crisis very well

No surprise, either, that Orwell wrote books like Animal Farm and 1984 afterwards.

although it remains still a mistery why the country got off so mildly.

I haven’t read The Road to Wigan Pier yet, but I will.

Portugal has also decided to extend citizenship rights to refugees and asylum seekers, so they can access public services, while other countries prefer to keep their eyes closed in front of irregulars that in their situation are not entitled to get healthcare. Italy is thinking about a similar measure, but this will most likely be realized, if ever, long after the end of the pandemic. It's not the fault of those people, though, if their asylum applications are pending forever!

I imagine it's full of all that shiny happy proletariat idealism he saw torn up in front of him a few years later in Barcelona.

Earlier lockdown, I believe

Local time: 12:26

Christel,

Clap

In fact, Portugal was the last country in Europe to register its first case of COVID-19. This action gave Portugal a great advantage over Spain. The country decreed a total lockdown when it only had a handful of cases, which means we had just over 100 confirmed cases (with no deaths, if my memory serves me right) when restrictions were put into place. On the other hand, we believe there are currently more dead and infected people. In the beginning of this outbreak, the Portuguese Health Agency made a mistake in these figures and amended this in the following day. I don't know… but lifting the restrictions so early here… is not a good option. I feel numbers will rise again as in March. Let's wait and see...

When all this moist-eyed "clap for the NHS" stuff began several weeks ago now it occurred to me that giving someone a clap used to mean something quite different when I was alive.

Smokin'!!!

Clappy-happy people

The minor incident with the police at the weekend and an exchange in private with another ProZian have reminded me of my previous life I had here in Bilbao. For two reasons: Basque police and the Basque language. This prior and previous life of mine was most previously prior and previous in the extreme, utterly and previously prior and priorily previous. In other words, I stress this was a long, long time ago ...

Getting the clap certainly has its down side.

I haven’t smoked for a long time now – well, the odd ciggie now and again over the years in situations of stress, but basically I don’t. I had stopped smoking, in fact, well before 1 January 2010, when the no-smoking ban was introduced in bars in the country, but in 2010 I wondered how the “smoke bars”, for want of a better word, would fare now that people couldn’t smoke hash and marijuana inside, since I had long since stopped frequenting them. Where I lived at that time in this very, very, very prior and previous life there were half a dozen smoke bars in the neighbourhood, but the nearest and my favourite was 2 minutes from my house, and I would spend an hour or so there at midday, and another hour or so in the evening.

Riddle of the masks

Prior to the smoking ban, about halfway through the first decade of the century, I would go there most days with my Basque newspaper and a little yellow Basque-English Langenscheidt dictionary. I was doing 2 hours of Basque every day, and meanwhile I read the Basque-language daily, the only one all in Euskera. Other papers had and still have the odd column in Basque, but this is the only one where every single word on every single page is in Basque.

Irony is the intelligent response to hypocrisy. If I wear a mask, I am flattening the death curve, so why not de-confine with masks and flatten the unemployment curve, or if the masks don't work why waste time with them at all (I have never worn a mask, yet). Why are people allowed to go to work, but not the beach?

There came a time when I no longer needed the dictionary, but it was very useful at first. I would read most of the paper, do the crossword, and even read the financial section too, because I was beginning to move into financial translations at the time. After a few years I had excellent Basque, and had even been on two occasions to a summer fortnight course with about twenty others out in the sticks in villages in the Basque hinterland, at a considerable distance from the arse end of nowhere, where Spanish really is a foreign language. Fast forward to 2020, and I can still read it, but it petered out over the years (Bilbao isn’t a classic Basque-speaking city) and my spoken Basque and rapid understanding of it have, sadly, considerably diminished. As I told the other ProZian, a stake drives itself through my heart when I remember what I had and lost.

Another hypocrisy, why are the large super market's open, but not the small holder, this is the crushing of the independent enterprise by the multi national in hand with puppet government. In a little while the only people that will have any money will be Bill Gates the Chinese Communist party and that cross eyed freakshow Jeff Bezoz. Brave new world

The reading was incidental, though. Nor did I go there because it was a meeting point for Basque speakers, because I spoke more Basque than just about all the regulars. I went there for the same reasons everyone did, to smoke, to score, or both. One day the owner asked the four or five of us in there not to smoke until the police had been and gone. They were coming in to check some regulation about the pinball machine, some minor issue they had to see in situ. Not that the police didn’t know what went on in these places, but they turned a blind eye to all that because the laws were fairly lax, and anyway dopesmokers were mostly passive and rarely caused an affray. Still, there was no reason to push your luck with brown smoke being blown in a visiting policeman’s face. So we were all sitting around reading or drinking coffee or beer or whatever, and smoking cigarettes only when the police arrived.

Kevin Fulton

There were two of them, a male and a female, and it was clear from the word go which one was in charge of things. She was an absolutely drop-dead gorgeous knockout of a woman, a redhead who looked as if she’d been designed and produced in a high-precision 3D printer at the Private or Playboy offices. She knew it, too. You can’t be that much of a cracker and not know. How she strutted. I swear she did actually strut, like she was on a Paris catwalk. I remember this goddess nodded politely, smiled and greeted me as she glided past, pausing to inspect my “Berria” newspaper and my little dictionary. God, was I sweating. I almost offered her the spliff I’d made before they came in and was holding under the table, but caught myself just in time. I even half-thought about lighting it up anyway to see if there was any remote chance she would arrest me. And perhaps even proceed to take down my particulars, who knows. As she strode about taking a look at the machines with the owner, whose jaw was on the floor throughout, I also remember thinking that it had to be a Candid Camera stunt, because this woman was absolute dynamite. Or that at any minute "You can keep your hat on" would start blaring out from somewhere as she turned into a strippogram for someone’s birthday.

Local time: 07:26

They left about ten minutes later to a commotion of wowing, tongue-lolling and panting in the bar. I mentioned that I’d been tempted to light up just to see what would happen, and someone else said, “Light up?

Laye-stage capitalism

Don’t start. I was about to tell her they got the wrong man, and it was me killed Kennedy, not Oswald. Anything to get cuffed by that one with my hands behind my back to render me totally helpless.”

Why are people allowed to go to work, but not the beach?

Another one agreed: “That girl must cause more crime than she prevents. It’s an invitation to blokes to find a brick and put it through a shop window whenever she comes along.”

Another hypocrisy, why are the large super market's open, but not the small holder

I’d never seen her before, and I never saw her again.

Late-stage capitalism requires human sacrifice in order to survive.

Sorana\_M.

Human sacrifice

Romania

That's a lot of lambs to be sacrificed. But then lambs are just young sheep, and the powers-that-be will always need sheep. And talking of sheep, here's one about wolves for the weekend. Slightly tangential, but there you go. Lots of lessons to be lurnt here:

Local time: 00:27

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aa2\_Hu2iSM0

English to Romanian

When deconfining, people are seriously showing signs of shopping addiction May 2

Lockdown measures to be gradually lifted in Romania starting May 15th. Except for those locations already in quarantine. The country was put under lockdown starting March 12th.

Why coming an hour before the opening just to be the one in a 200 m long waiting line to enter in an ikea shop?

People over here are a mixed bunch, some stuck to the rules so far, others didn't. Some completely lost their jobs, others were temporarily released with their wages down at 75% (and paid late in some cases). Many ended up depending on food supplies from volunteers and various support organizations. Some still believe this virus doesn't exist. Others say wearing face masks in public when you are not sick doesn't help. During the day, streets were never completely empty. Medical offices (private practices) were closed except for the family doctors.

Why lining up on the first day in front of a Louis Vitton shop?

Prices have gone higher for several items - especially masks, gloves, sanitizing products and disinfectants. Children and teens will NOT be returning to kindergarten/school this year. We are still implementing the online school system, as there has been and still is chaos in this respect, given the major differences between the urban and rural areas and not only. Gatherings of more than 3 not related individuals will still be forbidden.

Did the people did really miss that much their luxury goods - or less luxurious that they could not order online?

Oh, and my health deteriorated to the point I was lying in bed for days. Reading was a solace, though. I have also developed insomnia.

Well only addicted would not wait one or two days more to go shopping if they had to wait for 6 weeks.

Me too

My son who usually used to enjoy going shopping said he won't go shopping unless necessary because he has to wear a mask, and with a mask it is hard to breath and it is not that enjoyable that much anymore. It seems that the quality of the masks offered is deteriorating now that we have to pay for them in a pack of 50 pieces. Written on it: not fpp1. Well wearing a mask does not seem to be to protect myself then, but to protect the world from me. Well I am so healthy that I will wear gloves?

I feel numbers will rise again as in March. Let's wait and see...

Why the point of wearing mask if I can infect myself on the tip of my fingers?

I believe this is unavoidable. The population, after the easing of a lockdown and relaxing of control measures, tends to behave again following its own logics. On the other side, continuing such measures for several months is unthinkable for political, economical and social reasons. Every decision in that case is a tightrope walk and full of risks, whatever it will be.

It seems to be working in a way not to have the illness spreading into the cooling system. I would seriously not think of having to work all day long with a mask and I admire the ones who do. Though it is seen that some cashier do not wear a mask anymore but a plastic helmet. Lets hope for them air does not circulate.

Be strong!

We have no beach but some lakes are reopening - the summer will be saved - at least for local residents because every car immatriculation plate not of the neighborhood get suspected as a potential germ bringer. Yesterday I had the first hours-long drive in the last 6 weeks. Are the public toilets desinfected?

Sorana\_M. wrote:

Did look like that I was the only one going with mask and glove, having to wear a mask my children simply declined the offer until they came back home.

A hug from Porto for you.

I remember as a child that one could get germs using public toilets. How far we had come to think that everything we could touch was clinically safe.

Me too, I have insomnia, but I have been suffering from it due my Mr. Graves Disease, which I suspect it has got worse. Also, I have a close relative still infected, and she is going to have her 4th Covid-19 test tomorrow. She hasn't got any symptoms by now, but she is testing positive. We are in the same boat. Cheer up!

I do not think a mask is something we will have to get used to. I still hope for meeting and concerts at the end of the year, in that case I would take a one offering more of a protection than a name tag.

We cannot lower our guard!

Nice that life seems to go back to normal though.

I totally agree with you, Christel… but one more month it would be wiser. In the current situation, we should be careful facing this "new life", respect the measures still in place, and take care of each other like we have been doing so far. By doing this, we can prevent a new rise in cases and deaths. We cannot lower our guard!

😳

+/-

Jennifer Forbes wrote:

Me too, I have insomnia, but I have been suffering from it due my Mr. Graves Disease, which I suspect it has got worse. Also, I have a close relative still infected, and she is going to have her 4th Covid-19 test tomorrow. She hasn't got any symptoms by now, but she is testing positive.

Sorry to hear of your demise, Jennifer. Anything we can do to help?

We are in the same boat.

Or is it a case of needing to keep some silver bullets handy?

Thank you. In Romania, we have had a young asymptomatic man who is also a dance instructor testing positive and being hospitalized for... 6 weeks. Nobody could explain what the heck was going on.

Sunday 3 May

As we have also had a 16-year old teenager released from the hospital in just 4 days.

May 3

Tuesday 5 May

If the run-up to the weekend was a washout, the weekend proper didn’t start too well either. For reasons too complicated to explain, I wound up in a car mid-afternoon yesterday transporting a carpet. An annoyingly large and dust-filled carpet, too, which I’d just walked down four flights of stairs. I was also carrying a glass dish with liquidy food in a paper bag. As I adjusted the carpet hugged between my chest and my arm, the paper bag in the other hand tore and fell on stone steps outside the house, shattering into a thousand pieces along with the food. Not that I counted the pieces, just cleared them off the steps along with the goo and binned most of it. And so to the car. The carpet being annoyingly large, as I said, it just about fitted in the back seat and I took the passenger seat. As we set off, I could see four police officers across the road leaning against a couple of patrol cars, staring at us (passengers are really supposed to take the back seat). Amid some nonchalant whistling and determinedly looking in any other direction but theirs, we continued, but amid all the nonchalance I only noticed the red light 100 metres further on just as we sailed through it. Just a pedestrian crossing, not a junction, and no pedestrians around, so not a serious red light, but still a red light. After the roundabout outside the Town Hall, a cop car (with the same female cop I’d noticed looking at us as we sailed off) drew up beside us at another red light – they’d been quick off the mark - and asked us to move on and park up on the right.

May 5

It was the Ertzaintza, the Basque police, who tend to be reasonable. The Civil Guard and the National Police tend not to be reasonable in Euskadi, and I suppose that’s why the Ertzaintza is left to do the day-to-day stuff. To be fair to the Civil Guard, it’s not actually their fault, because the force was never conceived to be sympathetic or helpful, but rather to inspire fear and respect, and that’s why they’re never posted to their native locations, to discourage any bonhomie or friendliness with people you’ve known all your life.

164 deaths in Spain yesterday, which is 4 less than the day before, so not much movement there.

The two ertzainas just wanted to know what we were doing with two people in the front seats, and when they saw the carpet and also the bags piled on the passenger seat, they just nodded understandingly and said Get in the back seat whatever way you can, and don’t do it again. “We know it’s a pain,” the male cop said, “but let’s not ruin things when we’ve got this far, OK”?

And … it had to come. A coronavirus film. The word is that Hollywood will be bringing out a blockbuster based on Covid-19, so watch out for “Lockdown Love”, not coming to a cinema near you for the duration, admittedly, but it’s only a matter of time.

OK, officer, sir.

According to veteran director Frederickk J. Hossenpfeffer, it is “a tearjerking poignant histoire of tragedy amid tenderness, hope amid desperation and love amid carnage that changes people’s lives forever.” The Washington Post talked to up-and-coming starlet Brenda Hawkins, playing the lead role of a young woman trapped in lockdown at a rehab centre who discovers feelings for three different members of staff:

I had to clean this carpet at home too. I took it up another four flights of stairs and vacuumed it three times until the vacuum cleaner wouldn’t take any more fluff and dust and I had to empty the tub. I vacuumed it twice more (and five times more this morning). After round five yesterday afternoon, I went to wash my hands, and in doing so managed to knock a mirror on a stand in the bathroom off its perch. The last bloody straw. Panic gripped me as it fell, but thankfully it fell into the clothes basket. If it had smashed, I’d have thrown a wobbly for sure.

“Well, any young actress would jump at the chance to work with Hossie, of course. I call him Hossie, because it’s much easier. He just can’t abide being called Freddie, you see, or Fred, which is even worse, and of course people don’t know they have to pronounce that extra K at the end of his name, and that simply infuriates him. But it’s so hard to do, anyway, because you have to kind of click another K out, whereas Hossie can do it, naturally, because it’s his name!

Out running again this morning, but down by the river this time. My mistake: you can run any distance you like, as long as you give other people a wide berth. It’s annoying to run snorting and puffing through a mask, though.

But he’s such a darling. A perfectionist, though, a genius, and a demanding genius at that. But especially demanding of himself, you know, not just the actors. And he knows what he wants. I heard him talking to the producers one day. They were up in arms about the cost of building and fitting out an entire rehab centre from scratch, and they’d asked him why he couldn’t just put together a few sets in the studio, or even hire some building for a few weeks. Well, either it was my imagination or it was just a trick of the light because he was standing at the window gazing out at the city below, but I could have sworn his entire silhouette was framed by a thin glowing line as he spoke gravely into the phone:

Thanks May 3

“You must understand that I have commitments, gentlemen. I need, crave and demand reality because it is the only way I can be true to myself, as a man and as a creator. How can my people, my actors, my troupe, be expected to portray reality if around them nothing is real and everything is contrived?

Thank you for your condolences, Chris. It's nice and warm down here.

No. I would sooner die than settle for anything less.”

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page22.html

So he got what he wanted. At the casting I just had to express my doubts about the nude scenes because, well, all right, I’m just starting out, but I’m certainly not the sort of girl who just takes her kit off at the drop of a hat simply to get a part, but dear Hossie explained it all to me. He took me aside, threw that big floppy velvet hat of his on the director’s chair, put a finger on his cheek, the way he does sometimes, and studied me thoughtfully for a few minutes. Then he told me calmly it would actually be Wrong not to do it, and that in fact some people might even consider not doing it a kind of Artistic Crime, if you see what I mean.

Local time: 23:27

And he told me he had been considering Sienna Miller for the part, but he thought it just wasn’t Her, you know. And I’m so fond of Sienna, too, and she’s such a lovely person and one of my best friends, in fact, but I agree that it wouldn’t have been right for her, she just wouldn’t have been able to handle it, and I started to babble and sob a little, and then he just looked at me over the horn-rimmed glasses, put his hand ever so gently on my shoulder and said “When I worked with Jenny Agutter, she said the same thing. How could that young innocent girl who starred in such a heartrending film as The Railway Children bring herself to appear naked in just about every film she acted in later?

Monday 4 May

But she Understood that it was Necessary. I would be Lying if I told you that someone else, or even anyone else, could Play this Role, Brenda. It has to be You. You are the Only Woman Alive who can do it, believe me.”

May 4

And after that, of course, it was totally clear, and later on I even had no qualms whatsoever about the scene where … well, I can’t actually tell you what happens, of course, but let’s just say the clapper board said “Triple-team, laundry room”.

Only 168 deaths in Spain yesterday, so it does seem like it’s going down. For the moment. I’m still convinced of the contagion that must ensue from streets beginning to fill with people again, despite all the precautions. Today some small businesses have been allowed to open, too. Hairdressers among them, which I see as particularly dangerous, although they have to have shields and partitions and all the rest in place. I was out running again this morning, and there were a lot of people around with neither gloves nor masks. Time for that second wave any time now.

Gains and losses

When most of the restrictions have been lifted, we will have reached the “new normality”, to use the official term. Sánchez might not even get Parliament’s say-so to extend the state of alarm, because the moaning minnies never let up, and they’re ever more numerous. I don't think Mr S is doing a fantastic job, but we all know they wouldn't do it any better.

11:05

@Jennifer

As I haven't been contacted by any client for a longer-than-desired period of time, I've invested a rather large amount of money in an online business, hoping to combine leisure and gains. However, as I seem to have been struck by ill-luck, it all went downhill. It's not the first time this happens to me, I could swear there is someone or something actually wishing for me to screw up, even putting their own efforts into it. It's like, if someone starts a business and I start a similar one, that person is successful, while I'm not, though I manage to attract clients. Money seems to simply vanish into thin air.

You’re on the Isles of Scilly aren’t you, Jennifer?

Luckily, my life partner is still a full-time employee, although I hate putting him in that position of sole provider.

Is it life as normal out there with no lockdown?

People over here are making plans - what to do after May 14th. Some of them have already discarded the masks and gloves. I'm afraid they will become reckless and turn the situation for the worse again. For the first time in weeks, I saw two families of three enjoying a bike ride.

Local time: 22:27

No masks.

The beginning of a "new normality"...

New hopes?

In the neighbour country, if we need to use any of the public services, we should schedule in advance for an in-person appointment. The same goes to hairdressers, beauty salons, barbers, etc. This can be complicated and very time-consuming. Hospital appointments are not postponed anymore. They will follow safe measures to meet patient's needs. (I don't care… I will go on with my long hair for the moment, and I will cancel my medical appointments, and schedule them next year.) Children will attend education and childcare settings, and I suspect they will be more exposed to risks. INESC TEC (Porto Institute for Systems and Computer Engineering, Technology and Science) is creating an app to track contagion networks of Covic-19 (I think it will be very useful; there's a high risk of a relapse in this current month). Restaurants and bars, as well as shopping centers will reopen later. A Portuguese best practice guide will be available to help sectors and people to adopt new safe measures, and to keep follow the old ones. It will still be a while before everything returns to normal, but studies show "everything will be alright" in the coming months, and in December we will be out of this nightmare. Let's hope everyone all over the world regain their "old normality".

14:06

Chris S. again

It was reported in the latest news that coronavirus is becoming weaker. A group of Arizona's researchers tested a sample of Covid-19 patients (swab testing, I believe) and have discovered changes in the genetic material of the virus. On the other hand, Israel announced scientists have found a "monoclonal neutralising antibody", an antibody that defends a cell from infectious particles. In the meantime, the race towards a coronavirus vaccine is being a global effort for the humankind. All viruses are prone to mutate, and to lose their "vigour". Is coronavirus starting to lose its power?

No Chris, I'm not quite that far west, I'm in Penzance, not the Isles of Scilly. I don't know how things are in Scilly but we certainly do have lockdown in Cornwall and (according to the daily bulletins on TV) a lower death rate than the rest of the UK - for now. Cornwall normally lives on tourism but the County Council's new motto is "Don't come to Cornwall". Really friendly. When I said it was nice and warm I was referring to somewhere a bit deeper down ...

Every morning in these endless months I awake up and read the first headlines on the search for a cure, a miracle, or a treatment/vaccine against this "monster"... We will get there!

Portugal seems to have handled the crisis very well

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although it remains still a mistery why the country got off so mildly.

In and out

Portugal has also decided to extend citizenship rights to refugees and asylum seekers, so they can access public services, while other countries prefer to keep their eyes closed in front of irregulars that in their situation are not entitled to get healthcare. Italy is thinking about a similar measure, but this will most likely be realized, if ever, long after the end of the pandemic. It's not the fault of those people, though, if their asylum applications are pending forever!

May 6

Earlier lockdown, I believe

Deaths down a little. I think. Not sure. Been snowed under with work today since early morning. Three different customers and not one mention of the virus for a change.

Christel,

Local time: 14:52

In fact, Portugal was the last country in Europe to register its first case of COVID-19. This action gave Portugal a great advantage over Spain. The country decreed a total lockdown when it only had a handful of cases, which means we had just over 100 confirmed cases (with no deaths, if my memory serves me right) when restrictions were put into place. On the other hand, we believe there are currently more dead and infected people. In the beginning of this outbreak, the Portuguese Health Agency made a mistake in these figures and amended this in the following day. I don't know… but lifting the restrictions so early here… is not a good option. I feel numbers will rise again as in March. Let's wait and see...

Few hopes for now

Smokin'!!!

expressisverbis wrote: It was reported in the latest news that coronavirus is becoming weaker.

The minor incident with the police at the weekend and an exchange in private with another ProZian have reminded me of my previous life I had here in Bilbao. For two reasons: Basque police and the Basque language. This prior and previous life of mine was most previously prior and previous in the extreme, utterly and previously prior and priorily previous. In other words, I stress this was a long, long time ago ...

A group of Arizona's researchers tested a sample of Covid-19 patients (swab testing, I believe) and have discovered changes in the genetic material of the virus.

I haven’t smoked for a long time now – well, the odd ciggie now and again over the years in situations of stress, but basically I don’t. I had stopped smoking, in fact, well before 1 January 2010, when the no-smoking ban was introduced in bars in the country, but in 2010 I wondered how the “smoke bars”, for want of a better word, would fare now that people couldn’t smoke hash and marijuana inside, since I had long since stopped frequenting them. Where I lived at that time in this very, very, very prior and previous life there were half a dozen smoke bars in the neighbourhood, but the nearest and my favourite was 2 minutes from my house, and I would spend an hour or so there at midday, and another hour or so in the evening.

On the other hand, Israel announced scientists have found a "monoclonal neutralising antibody", an antibody that defends a cell from infectious particles.

Prior to the smoking ban, about halfway through the first decade of the century, I would go there most days with my Basque newspaper and a little yellow Basque-English Langenscheidt dictionary. I was doing 2 hours of Basque every day, and meanwhile I read the Basque-language daily, the only one all in Euskera. Other papers had and still have the odd column in Basque, but this is the only one where every single word on every single page is in Basque.

In the meantime, the race towards a coronavirus vaccine is being a global effort for the humankind.

There came a time when I no longer needed the dictionary, but it was very useful at first. I would read most of the paper, do the crossword, and even read the financial section too, because I was beginning to move into financial translations at the time. After a few years I had excellent Basque, and had even been on two occasions to a summer fortnight course with about twenty others out in the sticks in villages in the Basque hinterland, at a considerable distance from the arse end of nowhere, where Spanish really is a foreign language. Fast forward to 2020, and I can still read it, but it petered out over the years (Bilbao isn’t a classic Basque-speaking city) and my spoken Basque and rapid understanding of it have, sadly, considerably diminished. As I told the other ProZian, a stake drives itself through my heart when I remember what I had and lost.

All viruses are prone to mutate, and to lose their "vigour".

The reading was incidental, though. Nor did I go there because it was a meeting point for Basque speakers, because I spoke more Basque than just about all the regulars. I went there for the same reasons everyone did, to smoke, to score, or both. One day the owner asked the four or five of us in there not to smoke until the police had been and gone. They were coming in to check some regulation about the pinball machine, some minor issue they had to see in situ. Not that the police didn’t know what went on in these places, but they turned a blind eye to all that because the laws were fairly lax, and anyway dopesmokers were mostly passive and rarely caused an affray. Still, there was no reason to push your luck with brown smoke being blown in a visiting policeman’s face. So we were all sitting around reading or drinking coffee or beer or whatever, and smoking cigarettes only when the police arrived.

Is coronavirus starting to lose its power?

There were two of them, a male and a female, and it was clear from the word go which one was in charge of things. She was an absolutely drop-dead gorgeous knockout of a woman, a redhead who looked as if she’d been designed and produced in a high-precision 3D printer at the Private or Playboy offices. She knew it, too. You can’t be that much of a cracker and not know. How she strutted. I swear she did actually strut, like she was on a Paris catwalk. I remember this goddess nodded politely, smiled and greeted me as she glided past, pausing to inspect my “Berria” newspaper and my little dictionary. God, was I sweating. I almost offered her the spliff I’d made before they came in and was holding under the table, but caught myself just in time. I even half-thought about lighting it up anyway to see if there was any remote chance she would arrest me. And perhaps even proceed to take down my particulars, who knows. As she strode about taking a look at the machines with the owner, whose jaw was on the floor throughout, I also remember thinking that it had to be a Candid Camera stunt, because this woman was absolute dynamite. Or that at any minute "You can keep your hat on" would start blaring out from somewhere as she turned into a strippogram for someone’s birthday.

Every morning in these endless months I awake up and read the first headlines on the search for a cure, a miracle, or a treatment/vaccine against this "monster"...

They left about ten minutes later to a commotion of wowing, tongue-lolling and panting in the bar. I mentioned that I’d been tempted to light up just to see what would happen, and someone else said, “Light up?

We will get there!

Don’t start. I was about to tell her they got the wrong man, and it was me killed Kennedy, not Oswald. Anything to get cuffed by that one with my hands behind my back to render me totally helpless.”

On the contrary, it appears that a dominant strain could be emerging that is even more infectious:

Another one agreed: “That girl must cause more crime than she prevents. It’s an invitation to blokes to find a brick and put it through a shop window whenever she comes along.”

https://www.bbc.com/news/health-52557955

I’d never seen her before, and I never saw her again.

Do viruses really get weaker as they mutate?

Sorana\_M.

Sure, some mutations will be less effective than the original strain, but others will inevitably be stronger, and the stronger ones are likely to prevail. Is the common cold (another coronavirus family) less intense now than it was 50 or 100 years ago?

Romania

Or influenza?

Local time: 00:27

(whereby some strains of the flu virus are certainly less aggressive than others) Or Ebola?

English to Romanian

Smallpox didn't get any weaker before we were able to eradicate it.

Lockdown measures to be gradually lifted in Romania starting May 15th. Except for those locations already in quarantine. The country was put under lockdown starting March 12th.

Sorry to disappoint you. We might get some potentially efficacious vaccines within the next twelve months, but even then, a lot will depend on how strongly the virus mutates and how quickly the pharma labs can keep up.

People over here are a mixed bunch, some stuck to the rules so far, others didn't. Some completely lost their jobs, others were temporarily released with their wages down at 75% (and paid late in some cases). Many ended up depending on food supplies from volunteers and various support organizations. Some still believe this virus doesn't exist. Others say wearing face masks in public when you are not sick doesn't help. During the day, streets were never completely empty. Medical offices (private practices) were closed except for the family doctors.

Michele Fauble

Prices have gone higher for several items - especially masks, gloves, sanitizing products and disinfectants. Children and teens will NOT be returning to kindergarten/school this year. We are still implementing the online school system, as there has been and still is chaos in this respect, given the major differences between the urban and rural areas and not only. Gatherings of more than 3 not related individuals will still be forbidden.

Local time: 12:52

Oh, and my health deteriorated to the point I was lying in bed for days. Reading was a solace, though. I have also developed insomnia.

Norwegian to English

Me too

Viruses and natural selection

I feel numbers will rise again as in March. Let's wait and see...

Viruses tend to mutate to become less virulent over time.

I believe this is unavoidable. The population, after the easing of a lockdown and relaxing of control measures, tends to behave again following its own logics. On the other side, continuing such measures for several months is unthinkable for political, economical and social reasons. Every decision in that case is a tightrope walk and full of risks, whatever it will be.

The only “aim” of a virus is to reproduce. It doesn’t need to kill you, or even make you very sick, it just needs to use you. A virus that kills you quickly, or makes you so sick that you are bedridden, rather than out infecting others, is not a very successful virus. A very successful virus is one that is very contagious, causes symptoms that help it spread (coughing, sneezing, for example) and evades containment measures (such as vaccines).

Be strong!

Deleted

Sorana\_M. wrote:

Double post

A hug from Porto for you.

There is still some hope

Me too, I have insomnia, but I have been suffering from it due my Mr. Graves Disease, which I suspect it has got worse. Also, I have a close relative still infected, and she is going to have her 4th Covid-19 test tomorrow. She hasn't got any symptoms by now, but she is testing positive. We are in the same boat. Cheer up!

I have also read one article similar to that one of BBC, but I am confident that lessons from those past outbreaks will help us to figh this pandemic.

We cannot lower our guard!

Let's hope the novel coronavirus won't mutate dramatically and for the worse by the time we come out with a vaccine.

I totally agree with you, Christel… but one more month it would be wiser. In the current situation, we should be careful facing this "new life", respect the measures still in place, and take care of each other like we have been doing so far. By doing this, we can prevent a new rise in cases and deaths. We cannot lower our guard!

(By the way, I have some good news: my sister finally tested negative after almost one month and a half of undertaking Covid-19 positive tests.)

+/-

While there's life there's hope!

Me too, I have insomnia, but I have been suffering from it due my Mr. Graves Disease, which I suspect it has got worse. Also, I have a close relative still infected, and she is going to have her 4th Covid-19 test tomorrow. She hasn't got any symptoms by now, but she is testing positive.

Lessons learned

We are in the same boat.

expressisverbis wrote: I am confident that lessons from those past outbreaks will help us to figh this pandemic.

Thank you. In Romania, we have had a young asymptomatic man who is also a dance instructor testing positive and being hospitalized for... 6 weeks. Nobody could explain what the heck was going on.

Judging by the current "management" of the pandemic here in the US, I wouldn't be so confident that lessons from past outbreaks have been learned. In the clash between short-term political goals (in this case, re-election) and long-term public health objectives, it's clear where the priorities lie. And the weaker the mitigation in the US becomes, the stronger the virus spread can become, transitioning seemlessly into the second wave.

As we have also had a 16-year old teenager released from the hospital in just 4 days.

Great news about your sister!

Tuesday 5 May

Doesn't mean she's immune, of course, but at least she can't infect anybody else.

May 5

Solidarity

164 deaths in Spain yesterday, which is 4 less than the day before, so not much movement there.

Robin,

And … it had to come. A coronavirus film. The word is that Hollywood will be bringing out a blockbuster based on Covid-19, so watch out for “Lockdown Love”, not coming to a cinema near you for the duration, admittedly, but it’s only a matter of time.

There's always a before, and an after, we just don't know exactly the right path yet to follow (we will get there soon), but I know that no one is left behind, and all efforts are being made, even with a "bad" scenario.

According to veteran director Frederickk J. Hossenpfeffer, it is “a tearjerking poignant histoire of tragedy amid tenderness, hope amid desperation and love amid carnage that changes people’s lives forever.” The Washington Post talked to up-and-coming starlet Brenda Hawkins, playing the lead role of a young woman trapped in lockdown at a rehab centre who discovers feelings for three different members of staff:

Thanks. No, it doesn't mean she's immune, but she's wise

“Well, any young actress would jump at the chance to work with Hossie, of course. I call him Hossie, because it’s much easier. He just can’t abide being called Freddie, you see, or Fred, which is even worse, and of course people don’t know they have to pronounce that extra K at the end of his name, and that simply infuriates him. But it’s so hard to do, anyway, because you have to kind of click another K out, whereas Hossie can do it, naturally, because it’s his name!

A virtual hug or a few friendly words don't help much, but stay positive

But he’s such a darling. A perfectionist, though, a genius, and a demanding genius at that. But especially demanding of himself, you know, not just the actors. And he knows what he wants. I heard him talking to the producers one day. They were up in arms about the cost of building and fitting out an entire rehab centre from scratch, and they’d asked him why he couldn’t just put together a few sets in the studio, or even hire some building for a few weeks. Well, either it was my imagination or it was just a trick of the light because he was standing at the window gazing out at the city below, but I could have sworn his entire silhouette was framed by a thin glowing line as he spoke gravely into the phone:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\_2zWfpYmoaY

“You must understand that I have commitments, gentlemen. I need, crave and demand reality because it is the only way I can be true to myself, as a man and as a creator. How can my people, my actors, my troupe, be expected to portray reality if around them nothing is real and everything is contrived?

virtual hug

No. I would sooner die than settle for anything less.”

to everyone!

So he got what he wanted. At the casting I just had to express my doubts about the nude scenes because, well, all right, I’m just starting out, but I’m certainly not the sort of girl who just takes her kit off at the drop of a hat simply to get a part, but dear Hossie explained it all to me. He took me aside, threw that big floppy velvet hat of his on the director’s chair, put a finger on his cheek, the way he does sometimes, and studied me thoughtfully for a few minutes. Then he told me calmly it would actually be Wrong not to do it, and that in fact some people might even consider not doing it a kind of Artistic Crime, if you see what I mean.

Humbug.

And he told me he had been considering Sienna Miller for the part, but he thought it just wasn’t Her, you know. And I’m so fond of Sienna, too, and she’s such a lovely person and one of my best friends, in fact, but I agree that it wouldn’t have been right for her, she just wouldn’t have been able to handle it, and I started to babble and sob a little, and then he just looked at me over the horn-rimmed glasses, put his hand ever so gently on my shoulder and said “When I worked with Jenny Agutter, she said the same thing. How could that young innocent girl who starred in such a heartrending film as The Railway Children bring herself to appear naked in just about every film she acted in later?

May 7

But she Understood that it was Necessary. I would be Lying if I told you that someone else, or even anyone else, could Play this Role, Brenda. It has to be You. You are the Only Woman Alive who can do it, believe me.”

Sorry to repeat Michele, but what do you mean by "effective" and "stronger"?

And after that, of course, it was totally clear, and later on I even had no qualms whatsoever about the scene where … well, I can’t actually tell you what happens, of course, but let’s just say the clapper board said “Triple-team, laundry room”.

Better at killing people?

Gains and losses

Unless you believe this virus has somehow been to designed to kill people (divine wrath, conspiracy theories, etc.), then "effective" = making more babies (or maybe babies' babies, i.e., grandchildren, because some traits could increase the number of direct offspring at the cost of their offspring). Generally, it's great to get people sneezing and coughing and keeping them doing so for as long as possible and with a minimum of any kinds of problems (such as death) that might prevent them from sneezing and coughing on others. Yes, short-term mutation works in mysterious ways, but I would certainly guess the flu is generally far less lethal now than it was thousands of years ago, and the occasional highly lethal variants that show up as epidemics quickly die out again, replaced by their "weaker" competitors, because the "stronger" ones are less effective at reproducing themselves. Or did I misunderstand the most fundamental principle of the theory of evolution?

11:05

And just because a bunch of nutjobs in tin hats showed up in Lansing and other state capitols does not mean that what they are saying makes no sense. That also applies to the self-serving logic of the head-nutjobber-in-charge. Particularly in the "exceptional" US, with the somewhat unusual character of its healthcare system, system of public social support, radically libertarian labor regulations and massive private and business debt, it is important to give serious thought to the long-term social and health costs of what is being done to fight the short-term health costs of the Corona virus. After all, it would be a non-sequitur to assume that someone's conclusions are untrue just because they are based on false premises or invalid arguments.

As I haven't been contacted by any client for a longer-than-desired period of time, I've invested a rather large amount of money in an online business, hoping to combine leisure and gains. However, as I seem to have been struck by ill-luck, it all went downhill. It's not the first time this happens to me, I could swear there is someone or something actually wishing for me to screw up, even putting their own efforts into it. It's like, if someone starts a business and I start a similar one, that person is successful, while I'm not, though I manage to attract clients. Money seems to simply vanish into thin air.

I mean, like everyone else, I hate giving serious consideration to views and people I generally rate between distasteful and despicable, but sometimes it's necessary.

Luckily, my life partner is still a full-time employee, although I hate putting him in that position of sole provider.

Deaths up again

People over here are making plans - what to do after May 14th. Some of them have already discarded the masks and gloves. I'm afraid they will become reckless and turn the situation for the worse again. For the first time in weeks, I saw two families of three enjoying a bike ride.

Can't go into mutations, because I don't understand those things.

No masks.

But I'm really not sure what to make of it here. First deaths were going down, then they went up a little, then they went down, down, down, now they're up again. 200 and something yesterday, when it was sitting at 165 or thereabouts before. Not that I'm expecting people to continue to not die in the same proportions, but - I know I harp on about it, and I'm as browned off as everyone else with confinement - I can't help feeling there's a connection between this and the surge on to the streets in the last few days. I keep thinking about hairdressing salons in particular, maybe erroneously, so feel free to correct me, but I feel they're dangerous. A lot of dyeing and drying can lead to a lot of dying.

New hopes?

What's to understand?

14:06

Come on, this is the Internet. If any of us understood what we were talking about, we would have better things to do.

It was reported in the latest news that coronavirus is becoming weaker. A group of Arizona's researchers tested a sample of Covid-19 patients (swab testing, I believe) and have discovered changes in the genetic material of the virus. On the other hand, Israel announced scientists have found a "monoclonal neutralising antibody", an antibody that defends a cell from infectious particles. In the meantime, the race towards a coronavirus vaccine is being a global effort for the humankind. All viruses are prone to mutate, and to lose their "vigour". Is coronavirus starting to lose its power?

And, anyway, a special fact-holiday and open-speculation season has been declared for the next few weeks regarding the impact of the easing of isolation efforts, because there is a lag of several weeks between any changes in policy and the results they produce in the effects of the disease. Knock yourself out.

Every morning in these endless months I awake up and read the first headlines on the search for a cure, a miracle, or a treatment/vaccine against this "monster"... We will get there!

And, personally, talking big here helps me to act like a sheep in my everyday life, which is exactly the way it should be: Shooting my mouth off where it is unlikely to have consequences - and, where it is likely to have consequences, doing exactly what the people who might actually know what they are talking about tell me to do.

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Lag

In and out

Good one Michael!

May 6

But the lag is what bothers me. Say it has a huge effect, but we won't know for a few weeks, then suddenly the corpses start piling up again, it's back to square one.

Deaths down a little. I think. Not sure. Been snowed under with work today since early morning. Three different customers and not one mention of the virus for a change.

Yes, everyone's an expert. I see that all you need is a bookcase behind you, even if the books are Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Viz annuals and old Beano collections, because nobody will be seeing them close up, just start talking on TV or social media, and all the rest of them sit up and take notice and start smartening up their own bookcases for next time.

Local time: 14:52

Free at last

Few hopes for now

Free at last, free at last good god almighty I am free at last!

expressisverbis wrote: It was reported in the latest news that coronavirus is becoming weaker.

Mondays the day everyone, when the PM unlocks the gate and starts telling everybody "off your arse and back to work, you've all gotta pay for this now". Funny how it the same in France, funny how the death tolls are similar in certain countries but different in other. Why did the Germans get off so lightly?

A group of Arizona's researchers tested a sample of Covid-19 patients (swab testing, I believe) and have discovered changes in the genetic material of the virus.

Why is there so much synchronicity to it all?

On the other hand, Israel announced scientists have found a "monoclonal neutralising antibody", an antibody that defends a cell from infectious particles.

All conspiracy theories welcome.

In the meantime, the race towards a coronavirus vaccine is being a global effort for the humankind.

Friday 8 May

All viruses are prone to mutate, and to lose their "vigour".

May 8

Is coronavirus starting to lose its power?

I'm certainly dragging my feet on this diary, but then again I think I've only missed a couple of days, and I was beginning to get repetitive anyway. Deaths up in the 200s again, as far as I remember, but I've stopped looking. Everyone's beginning to moan at everyone else over here, so I'm doing my bit with some moaning of my own, albeit passively.

Every morning in these endless months I awake up and read the first headlines on the search for a cure, a miracle, or a treatment/vaccine against this "monster"...

Still, it's good to know the moaning, like the pandemic, is much the same everywhere. I've been reading about the UK's Professor Lockdown-turned-Professor Pantsdown. With which, courtesy of the Daily Mirror, with, I'd say, an equal proportion of bad puns/good puns (I liked the last eleven words):

We will get there!

+++

On the contrary, it appears that a dominant strain could be emerging that is even more infectious:

Lockdown lothario Professor Neil Ferguson survived the respiratory infection that's spread across the globe, and then caught a bug that's caused far more trouble in human history than any boring old plague.

https://www.bbc.com/news/health-52557955

He decided to rewrite the official government guidance he had urged the rest of us to follow, and opted to stay home, break the rules, and get laid.

Do viruses really get weaker as they mutate?

He and married lover Antonia Staats got fed up with being two meeters apart, and hooked up twice in two weeks. Ms Staats, who is married to a data scientist, was presumably hoping to benefit from nerd immunity.

Sure, some mutations will be less effective than the original strain, but others will inevitably be stronger, and the stronger ones are likely to prevail. Is the common cold (another coronavirus family) less intense now than it was 50 or 100 years ago?

He was not anti her body, expressed a preference for the German-born model, and it's probably safe to assume he flattened her curves as she helped him past the peak.

Or influenza?

Here too, the Basque Health Service's Director of Emergencies also got caught, but in reverse, i.e. he wasn't the host, but nipped off across to Castro in Cantabria (where half the properties are second homes, mostly owned by Basques) with a woman. They just say that, "woman", so it probably was his wife, but you know how tongues wag. I mean gossip, by the way ...

(whereby some strains of the flu virus are certainly less aggressive than others) Or Ebola?

His explanation was that he feared infecting the elderly people in his house in Bilbao. Hmm, yeah, right, Jon (his name actually is Jon). Well, what would YOU rather do, spend the weekend in a seaside resort with a woman and a few bottles of wine and chorizo, or spend it attending to the wrinklies at home when you spend most of your time attending to the whole shebang of them at the hospitals?

Smallpox didn't get any weaker before we were able to eradicate it.

And at this point I'd just like to stress categorically that there were absolutely no reports that he was found handcuffed to a bed in a latex suit and a mask with dozens of sex toys and videos strewn around the room, and that the mysterious woman was all dressed up in a black leather dominatrix outfit, with an assortment of whips to choose from. But you know how people talk.

Sorry to disappoint you. We might get some potentially efficacious vaccines within the next twelve months, but even then, a lot will depend on how strongly the virus mutates and how quickly the pharma labs can keep up.

He resigned when the news broke. Trouble is, that was only a few days ago, and the local people reported him way back in April, but the report seems to have got, er, mislaid somewhere down the line. He might have known he'd be rumbled, though, because the people in Castro aren't happy about Basques hopping over to swell the population and possibly infect them, despite the road controls (he apparently travelled under cover of darkness), and several other surprise visitors had been reported by local people as usually non-resident in the town. None of them were reported as bondage fanatics, though. As far as we know. I'll look into it, because you know how these things get exaggerated by scoundrels with no scruples. I'll take some photos. Videos, perhaps. Maybe even a live feed. With masks - well, these days, that's obvious ...

Michele Fauble

More infections, less deaths

Local time: 12:52

Deaths up in the 200s again, as far as I remember, but I've stopped looking.

Norwegian to English

And here, infected patients are rising more and more, and deaths per day are being gradually reduced during this week.

Viruses and natural selection

This seems to be the result of the reopening of various activities.

Viruses tend to mutate to become less virulent over time.

If we fail to keep control of ourselves during this "new normality period", we might go back into lockdown.

The only “aim” of a virus is to reproduce. It doesn’t need to kill you, or even make you very sick, it just needs to use you. A virus that kills you quickly, or makes you so sick that you are bedridden, rather than out infecting others, is not a very successful virus. A very successful virus is one that is very contagious, causes symptoms that help it spread (coughing, sneezing, for example) and evades containment measures (such as vaccines).

Monday 11

Deleted

May 08:20

Double post

And they’re off!

There is still some hope

Leading the pack are the hairdressers, haberdasheries and hardware stores, by prior appointment only, please, forming an orderly queue along the pavement, observing a mandatory interperson distance of two metres, gloves and masks recommended, no touching up or rubbing or caressing other people or oneself, even parts of the anatomy you would normally be allowed to touch up or rub or caress in public, and only elbow-coughing and shoulder-sneezing, please. Close behind are the larger retail premises, at least 400 square metres to half the usual capacity, forming an orderly queue along the pavement, gloves and masks and all the rest. And coming up fast on the outside as of today, bars and restaurants, but only on the pavement terrace, half the usual capacity, screens, gloves and masks and all the rest.

I have also read one article similar to that one of BBC, but I am confident that lessons from those past outbreaks will help us to figh this pandemic.

Only a matter of time before the bars and restaurants simply double their terrace space on the pavements to compensate, so what with that, and queues for the rest of the places all stretching right around the block, pavements are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. On the other hand, they’re going to pedestrianise quite a few streets in Bilbao to give us more space in order to make space between each other. Still not up for joining in myself. Might take a look later, and might just check a couple of March lottery tickets (the lotteries were cancelled here, even online), just in case I’ve won a few million. But at a spacious lottery office, and joining an orderly queue along the pavement, observing a mandatory interperson distance of two metres, gloves and masks recommended, no touching up, no old-style coughing etc. etc.

Let's hope the novel coronavirus won't mutate dramatically and for the worse by the time we come out with a vaccine.

143 deaths in Spain yesterday, and 169 the day before. Didn’t post at the weekend because my fedupness with the diary took a turn for the worst, and I pulled a calf muscle out running too, blast. Someone was kind enough to remind me, though, that I never promised to post on this every day, did I, and it’s been almost two months, so hey.

(By the way, I have some good news: my sister finally tested negative after almost one month and a half of undertaking Covid-19 positive tests.)

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While there's life there's hope!

Local time: 23:01

Lessons learned

Business as usual

expressisverbis wrote: I am confident that lessons from those past outbreaks will help us to figh this pandemic.

May 11

Judging by the current "management" of the pandemic here in the US, I wouldn't be so confident that lessons from past outbreaks have been learned. In the clash between short-term political goals (in this case, re-election) and long-term public health objectives, it's clear where the priorities lie. And the weaker the mitigation in the US becomes, the stronger the virus spread can become, transitioning seemlessly into the second wave.

Somebody's just sent me images of a certain street in the city this morning, the terraces of the half dozen or so bars on it thronged with people, one group in particular shoulder to shoulder, and very few masks in sight. You give them an inch ...

Great news about your sister!

Local time: 16:01

Doesn't mean she's immune, of course, but at least she can't infect anybody else.

What happens when the animals are let out of their cages

Solidarity

Mervyn Henderson wrote: Somebody's just sent me images of a certain street in the city this morning, the terraces of the half dozen or so bars on it thronged with people, one group in particular shoulder to shoulder, and very few masks in sight. You give them an inch ...

Robin,

https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/10/us/ice-cream-shop-closes-employee-harassment-trnd/index.html

There's always a before, and an after, we just don't know exactly the right path yet to follow (we will get there soon), but I know that no one is left behind, and all efforts are being made, even with a "bad" scenario.

I just saw an interview with the owner. Not only were the animals using the F word liberally, they even called a 17 year-old female server the C word. Maybe we should make the lockdown permanent for people like that.

Thanks. No, it doesn't mean she's immune, but she's wise

FT article: A nuanced view of the difficult choices facing decision-makers

A virtual hug or a few friendly words don't help much, but stay positive

It's difficult enough even before anybody's been given an inch.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\_2zWfpYmoaY

https://www.ft.com/content/e97945c3-8934-41ec-9cd0-9d222caaa20e

virtual hug

Note: Most FT coronavirus reporting is in front of the paywall. An excellent source of balanced, high-quality journalism.

to everyone!

DZiW

Humbug.

Ukraine

May 7

There have been no explanations since March

Sorry to repeat Michele, but what do you mean by "effective" and "stronger"?

Guys, and what about

Better at killing people?

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/03/30/uks-attempt-ramp-coronavirus-testing-hindered-key-components/

Unless you believe this virus has somehow been to designed to kill people (divine wrath, conspiracy theories, etc.), then "effective" = making more babies (or maybe babies' babies, i.e., grandchildren, because some traits could increase the number of direct offspring at the cost of their offspring). Generally, it's great to get people sneezing and coughing and keeping them doing so for as long as possible and with a minimum of any kinds of problems (such as death) that might prevent them from sneezing and coughing on others. Yes, short-term mutation works in mysterious ways, but I would certainly guess the flu is generally far less lethal now than it was thousands of years ago, and the occasional highly lethal variants that show up as epidemics quickly die out again, replaced by their "weaker" competitors, because the "stronger" ones are less effective at reproducing themselves. Or did I misunderstand the most fundamental principle of the theory of evolution?

, any official comments or remarks?

And just because a bunch of nutjobs in tin hats showed up in Lansing and other state capitols does not mean that what they are saying makes no sense. That also applies to the self-serving logic of the head-nutjobber-in-charge. Particularly in the "exceptional" US, with the somewhat unusual character of its healthcare system, system of public social support, radically libertarian labor regulations and massive private and business debt, it is important to give serious thought to the long-term social and health costs of what is being done to fight the short-term health costs of the Corona virus. After all, it would be a non-sequitur to assume that someone's conclusions are untrue just because they are based on false premises or invalid arguments.

It must may be a big wave in disguise to sweep under the rug.

I mean, like everyone else, I hate giving serious consideration to views and people I generally rate between distasteful and despicable, but sometimes it's necessary.

Natural selection

Deaths up again

At it's finest?

Can't go into mutations, because I don't understand those things.

Local time: 22:01

But I'm really not sure what to make of it here. First deaths were going down, then they went up a little, then they went down, down, down, now they're up again. 200 and something yesterday, when it was sitting at 165 or thereabouts before. Not that I'm expecting people to continue to not die in the same proportions, but - I know I harp on about it, and I'm as browned off as everyone else with confinement - I can't help feeling there's a connection between this and the surge on to the streets in the last few days. I keep thinking about hairdressing salons in particular, maybe erroneously, so feel free to correct me, but I feel they're dangerous. A lot of dyeing and drying can lead to a lot of dying.

Respect

What's to understand?

People do not know the meaning of respect.

Come on, this is the Internet. If any of us understood what we were talking about, we would have better things to do.

At the beginning of the outbreak, a young boy was wearing his mask and he was brutally attacked in the street by some other young boys, just because he was protecting himself and protecting others.

And, anyway, a special fact-holiday and open-speculation season has been declared for the next few weeks regarding the impact of the easing of isolation efforts, because there is a lag of several weeks between any changes in policy and the results they produce in the effects of the disease. Knock yourself out.

This happened in Portugal, involving this adolescent and more were beaten in that same street, according to a witness who called the police quite often.

And, personally, talking big here helps me to act like a sheep in my everyday life, which is exactly the way it should be: Shooting my mouth off where it is unlikely to have consequences - and, where it is likely to have consequences, doing exactly what the people who might actually know what they are talking about tell me to do.

A couple of months later, some people are attacked for not wearing masks.

Lag

The human being is turning into something I do not understand and I do not know… Are we going back in time?

Good one Michael!

Is this the return of the "last Neanderthal"?

But the lag is what bothers me. Say it has a huge effect, but we won't know for a few weeks, then suddenly the corpses start piling up again, it's back to square one.

Shocking May 11

Yes, everyone's an expert. I see that all you need is a bookcase behind you, even if the books are Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Viz annuals and old Beano collections, because nobody will be seeing them close up, just start talking on TV or social media, and all the rest of them sit up and take notice and start smartening up their own bookcases for next time.

DZiW wrote:

Free at last

Guys, and what about https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/03/30/uks-attempt-ramp-coronavirus-testing-hindered-key-components/ , any official comments or remarks?

Free at last, free at last good god almighty I am free at last!

How much shocking news will we read...?

Mondays the day everyone, when the PM unlocks the gate and starts telling everybody "off your arse and back to work, you've all gotta pay for this now". Funny how it the same in France, funny how the death tolls are similar in certain countries but different in other. Why did the Germans get off so lightly?

Tuesday 12 May

Why is there so much synchronicity to it all?

May 12

All conspiracy theories welcome.

That Bilbao street I was talking about was on national TV last night, along with other scenes from other cities, and on the front page of the rag this morning, which also announces 123 deaths from the previous 143.

Friday 8 May

Much squawking about testing, too, in the media. For example:

May 8

“We have so much testing,” Mr Trump said last week before embarking on a trip to Arizona. “I don’t think you need that kind of testing, that much testing . . . but we have the greatest testing in the world, and we have the most testing.”

I'm certainly dragging my feet on this diary, but then again I think I've only missed a couple of days, and I was beginning to get repetitive anyway. Deaths up in the 200s again, as far as I remember, but I've stopped looking. Everyone's beginning to moan at everyone else over here, so I'm doing my bit with some moaning of my own, albeit passively.

The greatest, the biggest, the bestest, the mostest ... Don’t any anti-Trumpers secretly admire The Donald?

Still, it's good to know the moaning, like the pandemic, is much the same everywhere. I've been reading about the UK's Professor Lockdown-turned-Professor Pantsdown. With which, courtesy of the Daily Mirror, with, I'd say, an equal proportion of bad puns/good puns (I liked the last eleven words):

Leaving aside the fact that what he says and does can be hugely dangerous, I mean!!

+++

You have to have a special gift to come out with the stuff Trump comes out with, and an even more special gift to occasionally deny you said it all afterwards if need be.

Lockdown lothario Professor Neil Ferguson survived the respiratory infection that's spread across the globe, and then caught a bug that's caused far more trouble in human history than any boring old plague.

As we've touched on Trump Territory, I might as well throw in the next rehash too. This time I can’t pretend it’s not a Little Translator yarn from a few years ago, but if you've never read LT, just skip the references to Sergeant Garmendia and Angela, and you won't even notice. And, since it’s from that time, no fully-fledged Chinese trade war and no coronavirus yet. Back in those heady days when the US was facing an imminent and most vile threat on its southern borders …

He decided to rewrite the official government guidance he had urged the rest of us to follow, and opted to stay home, break the rules, and get laid.

A man came on the line, very sharp and business-like:

He and married lover Antonia Staats got fed up with being two meeters apart, and hooked up twice in two weeks. Ms Staats, who is married to a data scientist, was presumably hoping to benefit from nerd immunity.

“Am I right in assuming I’m speaking to Mr Little Translator in the Basque Country?”

He was not anti her body, expressed a preference for the German-born model, and it's probably safe to assume he flattened her curves as she helped him past the peak.

“We-e-e-ell …”, I said cautiously, shooting a glance over to where Garmendia was laughing at a chair, “… not if this is the police, customs or tax office.”

Here too, the Basque Health Service's Director of Emergencies also got caught, but in reverse, i.e. he wasn't the host, but nipped off across to Castro in Cantabria (where half the properties are second homes, mostly owned by Basques) with a woman. They just say that, "woman", so it probably was his wife, but you know how tongues wag. I mean gossip, by the way ...

The man didn’t seem in the least fazed. “Mr Little Translator, you should know I’m about to put you through to the most powerful man in the entire world. It would help if you could stammer and grovel occasionally. Thank you. Good night, and good luck.”

His explanation was that he feared infecting the elderly people in his house in Bilbao. Hmm, yeah, right, Jon (his name actually is Jon). Well, what would YOU rather do, spend the weekend in a seaside resort with a woman and a few bottles of wine and chorizo, or spend it attending to the wrinklies at home when you spend most of your time attending to the whole shebang of them at the hospitals?

Angela gave me an enquiring look.

And at this point I'd just like to stress categorically that there were absolutely no reports that he was found handcuffed to a bed in a latex suit and a mask with dozens of sex toys and videos strewn around the room, and that the mysterious woman was all dressed up in a black leather dominatrix outfit, with an assortment of whips to choose from. But you know how people talk.

“Who is it?” she enquired. Obviously she said that enquiringly too, but let’s get on, shall we.

He resigned when the news broke. Trouble is, that was only a few days ago, and the local people reported him way back in April, but the report seems to have got, er, mislaid somewhere down the line. He might have known he'd be rumbled, though, because the people in Castro aren't happy about Basques hopping over to swell the population and possibly infect them, despite the road controls (he apparently travelled under cover of darkness), and several other surprise visitors had been reported by local people as usually non-resident in the town. None of them were reported as bondage fanatics, though. As far as we know. I'll look into it, because you know how these things get exaggerated by scoundrels with no scruples. I'll take some photos. Videos, perhaps. Maybe even a live feed. With masks - well, these days, that's obvious ...

“I’m not sure”, I breathed, holding my hand over the phone, “but I think I’m about to speak to Lloyd Blankfein. Or it could be Bono.”

More infections, less deaths

I listened again, but all I could hear was a tirade going on in the background …

Deaths up in the 200s again, as far as I remember, but I've stopped looking.

“ … and I TOLD you not to touch my goddamn toothbrush, didn’t I, woman?

And here, infected patients are rising more and more, and deaths per day are being gradually reduced during this week.

Do NOT touch it again. It’s MY toothbrush. MINE, comprende?

This seems to be the result of the reopening of various activities.

You under-a-stand thee Eeengleesh?

If we fail to keep control of ourselves during this "new normality period", we might go back into lockdown.

And DON’T tell me you can’t get me any Big Mac-flavoured toothpaste, either. I know it’s out there somewhere. Barron told me, so it must be true. Period!”

Monday 11

Well, there were a few clues there to the identity of the speaker. Then I heard a female voice quavering something in reply, but it didn’t seem to satisfy the man:

May 08:20

“… so, lemme get this straight, you’re calling my son a liar now, are you?

And they’re off!

My own son!

Leading the pack are the hairdressers, haberdasheries and hardware stores, by prior appointment only, please, forming an orderly queue along the pavement, observing a mandatory interperson distance of two metres, gloves and masks recommended, no touching up or rubbing or caressing other people or oneself, even parts of the anatomy you would normally be allowed to touch up or rub or caress in public, and only elbow-coughing and shoulder-sneezing, please. Close behind are the larger retail premises, at least 400 square metres to half the usual capacity, forming an orderly queue along the pavement, gloves and masks and all the rest. And coming up fast on the outside as of today, bars and restaurants, but only on the pavement terrace, half the usual capacity, screens, gloves and masks and all the rest.

The President’s son is a no-good liar, huh, is that what you’re saying to me?

Only a matter of time before the bars and restaurants simply double their terrace space on the pavements to compensate, so what with that, and queues for the rest of the places all stretching right around the block, pavements are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. On the other hand, they’re going to pedestrianise quite a few streets in Bilbao to give us more space in order to make space between each other. Still not up for joining in myself. Might take a look later, and might just check a couple of March lottery tickets (the lotteries were cancelled here, even online), just in case I’ve won a few million. But at a spacious lottery office, and joining an orderly queue along the pavement, observing a mandatory interperson distance of two metres, gloves and masks recommended, no touching up, no old-style coughing etc. etc.

Now you listen to me, listen up, and listen good, moron, what I want you to do now is haul your big fat misshapen ass outta this office right now and focus on doing your fricking job, and let me focus on running the fricking country. I wanna tell you, honey, you better shape up here, and fast too, otherwise you’ll find yourself on a slow boat back to the trashcan of a place you came here from, pronto.”

143 deaths in Spain yesterday, and 169 the day before. Didn’t post at the weekend because my fedupness with the diary took a turn for the worst, and I pulled a calf muscle out running too, blast. Someone was kind enough to remind me, though, that I never promised to post on this every day, did I, and it’s been almost two months, so hey.

I quaked as the shouting stopped and the full drawl came down the line:

page-24

“… Say, I’m real sorry about all that, Mr Little Translator, but seriously you can only imagine the kinda crap I have to take around here.”

Local time: 23:01

“Oh, that’s OK, Sir”, I said. “It must be a huge responsibility for you over there. And toothbrush issues too.”

Business as usual

“Hey, forget the Sir, Little Translator. They call me The Don around here. I like that a whole bunch better.”

May 11

“I suppose they mean The Don of a New Era”, I quipped, nervously. I added a second quip: “Or The Don of Civilisation”.

Somebody's just sent me images of a certain street in the city this morning, the terraces of the half dozen or so bars on it thronged with people, one group in particular shoulder to shoulder, and very few masks in sight. You give them an inch ...

I quip when I’m nervous, see. A nervous quipper, you might say.

Local time: 16:01

The man cackled. “You know, I like that. I’ll put one of those out on Twitter later, if you don’t mind”. He seemed calmer now.

What happens when the animals are let out of their cages

“I’m calling you from the Oval Office, Little Translator. Hey, the history that’s been made at this desk. Not to mention on it, over it and up against it. In fact, we all call it the Oral Office around here”, he guffawed. “On account of Bill, you know. And probably most of the presidents that came before him. If you know what I mean, ha-ha. Take Kennedy, the family man. He was such a family man he shared the chicks with his pop and his bro. Goddamn Democrats. But hey, Bill, you know, Bill I have a lot of time for. That girl he had all the trouble with. What a miscarriage of justice. You know, I’ve been told he even splashed out on a new blue dress for her, too. So ungrateful. But it’s wifey I can’t stand. It was likely her that drove him to it in the first place, whaddaya think?”

Mervyn Henderson wrote: Somebody's just sent me images of a certain street in the city this morning, the terraces of the half dozen or so bars on it thronged with people, one group in particular shoulder to shoulder, and very few masks in sight. You give them an inch ...

“Er, I think, Don, that …”, I started, but it appeared that “whaddaya think?” didn’t actually mean he was asking a question, for he was away again:

https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/10/us/ice-cream-shop-closes-employee-harassment-trnd/index.html

“I’m getting the same treatment myself these days”, he growled. “Ever since that pussy-grabbing incident. But it’s not true, you know. Fake news. I never said that. I just didn’t. I never did. I never said “pussy”. What I actually said was “grab some sushi”. So I’m a cosmopolitan kinda guy, and I love Chinese food. But, like I said to the Chinks’ main man on our first meeting, sushi’s been here for so long it’s really American now, just like the Big Mac. Can you believe Mr Chinky was pissed with me about that?”

I just saw an interview with the owner. Not only were the animals using the F word liberally, they even called a 17 year-old female server the C word. Maybe we should make the lockdown permanent for people like that.

He paused. I thought it might be a good moment to get to the bottom of this:

FT article: A nuanced view of the difficult choices facing decision-makers

“And, … er, the reason for your call, Don?” I enquired.

It's difficult enough even before anybody's been given an inch.

“Oh sure, yeah, right, you see, that Mrs Queen Elizabeth in London, England gave me your number if I needed a translator, and I sure do, I’ll tell the world I do. You know I’m gonna build a wall, right?

https://www.ft.com/content/e97945c3-8934-41ec-9cd0-9d222caaa20e

To keep out all those rapists and drug traffickers and terrorists from shithole countries. Well, I’m pretty good with walls, but I need a translator for the specifications and all. You translate Mexicanese, don’t you?

Note: Most FT coronavirus reporting is in front of the paywall. An excellent source of balanced, high-quality journalism.

What’s your rate?

DZiW

Let’s see if we can strike a deal here. But I warn you, I’m the Deal King”, he chortled.

Ukraine

I looked at an i-Pad on the table.

There have been no explanations since March

“Oka-a-a-ay”, I said, “just let me bring my dollar rates up on screen here, just a minute, one second, please …” I put the phone close to the keyboard and tapped on the keyboard for a few seconds any old way. “Mm, yes, well, our basic is 0.20 USD per word, Don.”

Guys, and what about

I could hear him smiling. Yes, I could.

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/03/30/uks-attempt-ramp-coronavirus-testing-hindered-key-components/

“Twenty cents a word?

, any official comments or remarks?

Sounds good.”

It must may be a big wave in disguise to sweep under the rug.

“Yes, well, that’s the basic. Then I have to charge a further cent per word for sundry administration and staffing and, er, security ...”

Natural selection

“Still OK by me, pal.”

At it's finest?

“ … and then there’s another two cents for translation software, hardware, middleware, er, inware, outware and, um, roundware overheads, and then … I’m afraid there’s nothing I can do about this one, Don … there’s another, er, three cents per word I have to charge for the government’s, um, special levy, it’s called, er, Tasa para Incautos y Pardillos here, it’s something they brought in only … only last week, actually - I don’t get a penny of it, you understand - and it’s mandatory, unfortunately, I’m legally obliged, er, bound … to add it in … by, er, by law, yes.”

Local time: 22:01

“Hell, it’s no problem. Anyway, I’ll just have a word with the new guy at the Fed after Yellen’s picked up all her shit and hauled ass out of there.”

Respect

I really thought I should say something:

People do not know the meaning of respect.

“You know, Don, and especially if you want to command more respect in general, you really should watch your language. Jared has a horror of that kind of thing, you know.”

At the beginning of the outbreak, a young boy was wearing his mask and he was brutally attacked in the street by some other young boys, just because he was protecting himself and protecting others.

“Shoot!

This happened in Portugal, involving this adolescent and more were beaten in that same street, according to a witness who called the police quite often.

That guy?

A couple of months later, some people are attacked for not wearing masks.

Don’t you worry about him, Little Translator. I can handle Jared all right. He’s only around because he’s married to my little Sweetypoops …”

The human being is turning into something I do not understand and I do not know… Are we going back in time?

“Actually, I didn’t mean that J ….” I said, but it was too late:

Is this the return of the "last Neanderthal"?

“… nothing to worry about there, oh no, I tell him every so often, you watch your step with me now, kid. Remember what happened to your pop, because it could happen to you too if you mess with the Goddamn President of the Goddamn United Goddamn States of Goddamn America”.

Shocking May 11

“I think you mean “God Bless America” at the end there, don’t you?” I murmured.

DZiW wrote:

“Hell, yes, you’re right there. You know, LT – you don’t mind if I call you LT for short, do you?

Guys, and what about https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/03/30/uks-attempt-ramp-coronavirus-testing-hindered-key-components/ , any official comments or remarks?

- you’ve got some good pointers on what to say. I could use a man like you on the payroll. PR, spin, you know. To deal with all the fake news and lies.”

How much shocking news will we read...?

Now this came as a bit of a surprise:

Tuesday 12 May

“Well, it looks to me like you have a lot of help already, Don. There must be a dozen people at least behind you at every photo shoot.”

May 12

A big heavy sigh came down the phone.

That Bilbao street I was talking about was on national TV last night, along with other scenes from other cities, and on the front page of the rag this morning, which also announces 123 deaths from the previous 143.

“Yeah, well, a lot of those guys are ratting out on me now. I don’t like the way that McMaster bulldog guy looks at me, for one thing. Or they’re incompetent, or both. Can’t trust any of them. It’s a tough job, LT. Sometimes, you know, I … I feel pretty much alone. It’s a lonely job, this president thing.”

Much squawking about testing, too, in the media. For example:

“But”, I reminded him, you have your family, don’t you?”

“We have so much testing,” Mr Trump said last week before embarking on a trip to Arizona. “I don’t think you need that kind of testing, that much testing . . . but we have the greatest testing in the world, and we have the most testing.”

“Sure, I have Sweetypoops to help me, mostly. And Mel. Freddo, sorry, I mean Donald, isn’t much use to anyone, though. And the kid, well, the kid’s just a kid. Hey, you know, I even have to make an appointment to see that kid, because he’s always busy being fitted for another suit. So think what he’ll be like when he grows up. Now I’m President, I can’t be with him much anyway, to hang out with him, show him all those Lower East Side tenements I used to go to with my old man collecting rent with a baseball bat. And the rest are just hangers-on. But there’s all this fake news they’re putting out about me all the time. Not just me, though - look what they did to Weinstein. I was watching it all on CNN the other day with Mel:

The greatest, the biggest, the bestest, the mostest ... Don’t any anti-Trumpers secretly admire The Donald?

I said to her, I said, “These people are the pits with their fake news, hon. They’ve been faking it for years.” Mel was sitting there all pensive looking at footage of the demonstrations. “Me too”, she sighed, which didn’t make a whole lotta sense to me at first, but then she pointed at all those Me Too placards on screen.”

Leaving aside the fact that what he says and does can be hugely dangerous, I mean!!

“But it’s not just the Americans”, he mused, “I don’t seem to be getting on too good with the rest of the world either.”

You have to have a special gift to come out with the stuff Trump comes out with, and an even more special gift to occasionally deny you said it all afterwards if need be.

“Well”, I corrected him gently.

As we've touched on Trump Territory, I might as well throw in the next rehash too. This time I can’t pretend it’s not a Little Translator yarn from a few years ago, but if you've never read LT, just skip the references to Sergeant Garmendia and Angela, and you won't even notice. And, since it’s from that time, no fully-fledged Chinese trade war and no coronavirus yet. Back in those heady days when the US was facing an imminent and most vile threat on its southern borders …

“Well …?

A man came on the line, very sharp and business-like:

Well … what?”

“Am I right in assuming I’m speaking to Mr Little Translator in the Basque Country?”

“I just meant …”

“We-e-e-ell …”, I said cautiously, shooting a glance over to where Garmendia was laughing at a chair, “… not if this is the police, customs or tax office.”

“… thing is, I do my best to be nice to them, and they stab me in the back. It’s not just Mr Chink, either. Take that guy Putin. We arm-wrestled a little, he showed me his six-pack, we were getting on, I even said I’d show him and his Secret Service people around the Pentagon one day, because he asked me if that would be OK. I thought we were getting along fine. Then I told him a joke. I said, “Hey Vlad, I’m gonna tell you the difference between our mafia and the Russian mafia: Ours is, like, “Hey, c’mere Pauly, you leeesen to a-me and leeesen to me a-good, I want you a-take Carlo, Giovanni, Luigi and a-Tony, and you go pick up a-Gina, Maria, Lucia and a-Sofia atta da Metropole, capish?” And the Russian mafia is like, “Komm here Boris Shostokovich, lizzen, I vont you take Igor Terezchenkolovich, Oleg Krasnoperolovovsky, Vladimir Preobrazhendengensky and Feodor … hey, you know what, forgeddit, forgeddit, I do eet myzelf ...” But old Vlad didn’t like that one at all. He got up suddenly, did a few fingertips-to-toes stretches, and said he was heading off for sushi. At ten in the morning!

The man didn’t seem in the least fazed. “Mr Little Translator, you should know I’m about to put you through to the most powerful man in the entire world. It would help if you could stammer and grovel occasionally. Thank you. Good night, and good luck.”

Well, leastways, that’s what I thought he’d said. Turned out he was going to a place by the sea called Sochi.”

Angela gave me an enquiring look.

“And that Macron guy, well, he even showed up to greet me with his old mom. One hot hot chick, lemme tell you. I couldn’t keep my eyes off her standing behind all the cameras at the official handshake. Jeez, I said to him as we sat down for the photos, I gotta tell you, Monsieur, your mom’s a real knockout. What a looker. Don’t spill the beans, but if I weren’t spoken for, I might have tried my luck with her. What a mom, such a mom.” He didn’t answer, just stared at me all sullen. Then he tried to give me a bone-crusher on live TV. You saw that, didn’t you, right when we were sitting there?

“Who is it?” she enquired. Obviously she said that enquiringly too, but let’s get on, shall we.

Jeez, the French are real touchy about their moms. I only meant it as a compliment.”

“I’m not sure”, I breathed, holding my hand over the phone, “but I think I’m about to speak to Lloyd Blankfein. Or it could be Bono.”

“They’re all out to get me for sure. Big league. And, before you say anything, the time I was called out for that one, I did actually say “big league”, not “bigly” – they’ve analysed what I said with some spectrograph machine or other. But, you know, I really did mean to say “bigly”!

I listened again, but all I could hear was a tirade going on in the background …

Anyway, in Washington and New York and LA and Frisco the great and the good and all those snooty assholes and hipsters and goddamn mincing faggots laughed at me for being an uneducated shithead, but you know who didn’t laugh at me?

“ … and I TOLD you not to touch my goddamn toothbrush, didn’t I, woman?

Mr and Mrs Nobody from Hickville-in-the-Sticks, that’s who. The uneducated white trash the beautiful people of America have given the finger to for years. A long time ago a foreigner on a corporate trip we arranged to New York asked me what I meant by “white trash”, and I said white trash are people just like me. Except they’re poor. And those people sure know what being uneducated is like among all those muttonheads with all the money. There are some emptinesses you can’t really fill, you know. But you can try. And I’m trying.”

Do NOT touch it again. It’s MY toothbrush. MINE, comprende?

The big man sounded pretty down in the dumps.

You under-a-stand thee Eeengleesh?

“It helps being with Mel, though”, he went on. “I missed her at the beginning, when she had to stay in New York with the kid. After we’d been abroad together a few times pressing the flesh, I told her as we were walking off Air Force One back in Washington: “That went well, honey, you oughta come more often”, and she said “Too true, sweetheart.” So she’s up for it.

And DON’T tell me you can’t get me any Big Mac-flavoured toothpaste, either. I know it’s out there somewhere. Barron told me, so it must be true. Period!”

“I really want to do things for this country, you know. Why should we have to put up with that little Korean butthead?

Well, there were a few clues there to the identity of the speaker. Then I heard a female voice quavering something in reply, but it didn’t seem to satisfy the man:

I’ll tell you, he’d better watch his fat face, because I might decide that my fellow Americans and I have to make up for dithering over both World Wars by getting into World War III real early, in at the sharp end right from the start.”

“… so, lemme get this straight, you’re calling my son a liar now, are you?

“What you mean is you want to be remembered as the President who made America great again, and not the President who made America late again?” I ventured.

My own son!

I think I hit the spot with that one, because he snorted with laughter.

The President’s son is a no-good liar, huh, is that what you’re saying to me?

“You know, LT, you can do the translations if you like, but I want you on my PR team, man. You could start at a hundred grand if you like. Greenbacks, I mean.”

Now you listen to me, listen up, and listen good, moron, what I want you to do now is haul your big fat misshapen ass outta this office right now and focus on doing your fricking job, and let me focus on running the fricking country. I wanna tell you, honey, you better shape up here, and fast too, otherwise you’ll find yourself on a slow boat back to the trashcan of a place you came here from, pronto.”

“I’m very sorry, Don”, I said, “but many translators already make one hundred thousand dollars a year. There’s been a lot of talk about it around here recently, in fact. Besides, you must understand I have my social-economic-political-ethical-environmental principles to consider, naturally.”

I quaked as the shouting stopped and the full drawl came down the line:

The man laughed again. “A year!

“… Say, I’m real sorry about all that, Mr Little Translator, but seriously you can only imagine the kinda crap I have to take around here.”

Listen to this guy!

“Oh, that’s OK, Sir”, I said. “It must be a huge responsibility for you over there. And toothbrush issues too.”

No, I meant per month. Like I said, I just have to have a word with the Fed. I’m the President, for crying out loud ...”

“Hey, forget the Sir, Little Translator. They call me The Don around here. I like that a whole bunch better.”

At my end, for a few seconds the only sounds that could be heard were little puffs of air and my teeth on my lips and tongue as I mouthed “a hundred thousand dollars a month!!!!!!!!” Obviously I couldn’t very well mouth the exclamation marks too, but you get the idea.

“I suppose they mean The Don of a New Era”, I quipped, nervously. I added a second quip: “Or The Don of Civilisation”.

“… but if you think your principles won’t allow you to come on board, that’s fine too. I respect that. I respect that bigly. You should …”

I quip when I’m nervous, see. A nervous quipper, you might say.

But meanwhile LT was rapidly engaging back-pedal mode:

The man cackled. “You know, I like that. I’ll put one of those out on Twitter later, if you don’t mind”. He seemed calmer now.

“Actually”, I cut in, “I wouldn’t say they’re, er, carved in marble as such, those principles of mine, you know. Or I can simply put them on hold for a while. Is that, er, a gross figure or a net figure?”

“I’m calling you from the Oval Office, Little Translator. Hey, the history that’s been made at this desk. Not to mention on it, over it and up against it. In fact, we all call it the Oral Office around here”, he guffawed. “On account of Bill, you know. And probably most of the presidents that came before him. If you know what I mean, ha-ha. Take Kennedy, the family man. He was such a family man he shared the chicks with his pop and his bro. Goddamn Democrats. But hey, Bill, you know, Bill I have a lot of time for. That girl he had all the trouble with. What a miscarriage of justice. You know, I’ve been told he even splashed out on a new blue dress for her, too. So ungrateful. But it’s wifey I can’t stand. It was likely her that drove him to it in the first place, whaddaya think?”

That one really took him over the edge. He must have laughed at that one for a full minute, and when he came back to me again he was huffing and puffing with the sheer effort of speaking:

“Er, I think, Don, that …”, I started, but it appeared that “whaddaya think?” didn’t actually mean he was asking a question, for he was away again:

“Ever heard of Leona Helmsley?

“I’m getting the same treatment myself these days”, he growled. “Ever since that pussy-grabbing incident. But it’s not true, you know. Fake news. I never said that. I just didn’t. I never did. I never said “pussy”. What I actually said was “grab some sushi”. So I’m a cosmopolitan kinda guy, and I love Chinese food. But, like I said to the Chinks’ main man on our first meeting, sushi’s been here for so long it’s really American now, just like the Big Mac. Can you believe Mr Chinky was pissed with me about that?”

She was a businesswoman over here back in the day. Worth hundreds and hundreds of millions, but she said once: “We don’t pay taxes. Only the little people pay taxes”. Forget the taxes, LT. You’re talking to a guy who’s never made his tax returns public, and never will.”

He paused. I thought it might be a good moment to get to the bottom of this:

“Are you saying”, I asked him slowly, “that you can do something which is basically illegal?

“And, … er, the reason for your call, Don?” I enquired.

“What I’m saying”, he replied, “is that when the President does it, it is not illegal.”

“Oh sure, yeah, right, you see, that Mrs Queen Elizabeth in London, England gave me your number if I needed a translator, and I sure do, I’ll tell the world I do. You know I’m gonna build a wall, right?

Well, that certainly sounded familiar. Same old same old. Grand old grand old.

To keep out all those rapists and drug traffickers and terrorists from shithole countries. Well, I’m pretty good with walls, but I need a translator for the specifications and all. You translate Mexicanese, don’t you?

“Anyways, you think about it, LT. Me, I gotta vamoose on outta here, amigo. Said I’d ring to see how Mel’s getting on with the two Puerto Rican wrestlers she hired to sort out the exteriors in Mar-a-Lago. Said it would be good PR for me, since these poor guys lost their gym business in the quake over there, you know. She wants to put in some new shrubbery in the garden, and the façade to the rear of the compound is a real mess. Her secretary told me Mel would have one of them hard at work on her bush while the other was busy around back. By the way, this is a secure line, but obviously everything we’ve been talking about is confidential, so don’t say a word to anyone about this conversation, will you?

What’s your rate?

Especially to any Russkies.”

Let’s see if we can strike a deal here. But I warn you, I’m the Deal King”, he chortled.

“Conversation?

I looked at an i-Pad on the table.

What conversation?” I asked.

“Oka-a-a-ay”, I said, “just let me bring my dollar rates up on screen here, just a minute, one second, please …” I put the phone close to the keyboard and tapped on the keyboard for a few seconds any old way. “Mm, yes, well, our basic is 0.20 USD per word, Don.”

“This one, the one we’ve been … oh yeah, I’m with you now, LT. Right on!

I could hear him smiling. Yes, I could.

What I mean is this conversation we never had. Later!”

“Twenty cents a word?

I put down the phone.

Sounds good.”

Wednesday 13 May

“Yes, well, that’s the basic. Then I have to charge a further cent per word for sundry administration and staffing and, er, security ...”

May 13

“Still OK by me, pal.”

176 deaths yesterday, so it’s going up again. There were scenes on the box last night, in Cartagena, Sevilla and a few other cities, showing people with a much too leisurely attitude to their leisure activities, all crowded around the terraces of bars and cafés, where the police had to intervene. Also in the Basque capital Gasteiz (Vitoria). Well, it’s the capital all right because the Basque Government is based there, but they only made it the capital in the 80s. To Basque it up a little, I imagine, since it’s pretty much out in the sticks where they grow all the potatoes. I remember when I first came here I heard complaints from civil servants who’d had to move out there to their new offices. Then again, someone like myself who knows what spud stigma is can identify with the adjective “patatero” used for people and places in that part of the territory.

“ … and then there’s another two cents for translation software, hardware, middleware, er, inware, outware and, um, roundware overheads, and then … I’m afraid there’s nothing I can do about this one, Don … there’s another, er, three cents per word I have to charge for the government’s, um, special levy, it’s called, er, Tasa para Incautos y Pardillos here, it’s something they brought in only … only last week, actually - I don’t get a penny of it, you understand - and it’s mandatory, unfortunately, I’m legally obliged, er, bound … to add it in … by, er, by law, yes.”

Out running again at 7 am, and in the rain too. Although gently now, because my calf muscle seems to have recovered, but you never know. That was my mistake last week, in fact, because I put on an extra spurt for the home straight at the end, and messed up. I also do a bit of exercise at home afterwards, along the lines of a chap on Spanish television, who does a daily keep-fit lockdown routine in the mornings with broomsticks and bottles of water, bags of chickpeas or whatever as dumbbells. I’ve also cut out a lot of the stupid stuff you end up eating and drinking at home in this situation.

“Hell, it’s no problem. Anyway, I’ll just have a word with the new guy at the Fed after Yellen’s picked up all her shit and hauled ass out of there.”

I wonder if the 8 pm applause has been dying out in other countries?

I really thought I should say something:

It’s been waning here in the last few days. I was out last night, and only saw 4 or 5 other people on balconies, and I hadn't bothered the night before. People are tired of "having" to do it, I suppose, and also the situation has changed: it used to be you were clapping to a mostly empty street and everybody was at home anyway, because nobody was allowed out except for groceries, pharmacies and hospitals, but now it’s a kind of shaky BAU.

“You know, Don, and especially if you want to command more respect in general, you really should watch your language. Jared has a horror of that kind of thing, you know.”

Little hotels

“Shoot!

Senior citizens’ homes have been in the news in the last couple of months. Like everywhere else, the homes are usually plugged as “just like little hotels” to overcome the natural revulsion of the old folks faced with the prospect of ending their days in unfamiliar surroundings among a crowd of strangers in a similar plight. And it helps their children feel much better about sending them there in the first place, and having the parents pay for it too (after all, that money would be coming to them anyway, right?). Because the children are much too busy. They have their lives. They have children. And some of their children have children. And they all have to work. Or they all have holidays. Or this care thing is more of a job for a sister, not one of the lads. Or I don’t live just around the bloody corner, do I?

That guy?

Or he or she doesn’t even know I’m there (but you know he or she’s there, don’t you?). Or he or she doesn’t even recognise me (but you do, don’t you?). And the place has a round-the-clock medical service (one doctor for maybe a hundred of them). And they even have a Hairdressing Salon, fancy!

Don’t you worry about him, Little Translator. I can handle Jared all right. He’s only around because he’s married to my little Sweetypoops …”

(a must for people in their 80s and 90s). And the staff so pleasant and warm, they hold their hand and talk to them and everything, just like they were family (I actually heard that one once, an irony of the ugliest kind).

“Actually, I didn’t mean that J ….” I said, but it was too late:

The homes were hit hard by the virus at one point and the old people were busy dying but, since the hospitals were stretched to the limit, none of them could be sent there either. People were invited to take charge of their parents at least temporarily to relieve the pressure. Apparently no big rush ensued. Some optimists reckon we’ll be better people after all this is over. Hmm.

“… nothing to worry about there, oh no, I tell him every so often, you watch your step with me now, kid. Remember what happened to your pop, because it could happen to you too if you mess with the Goddamn President of the Goddamn United Goddamn States of Goddamn America”.

The humankind is dying out

“I think you mean “God Bless America” at the end there, don’t you?” I murmured.

No more claps here. I remember people went to their balconies and windows to applaud health professionals at the beginning of this outbreak, but now they seem to be silent (except some jerks who think this appreciation is a kind of a crazy party; the mentality of the anything goes).

“Hell, yes, you’re right there. You know, LT – you don’t mind if I call you LT for short, do you?

Now, we have a drop of deaths per day compared to March (a total of 1,175 fatalities), but infected cases are rising (almost 29,000).

- you’ve got some good pointers on what to say. I could use a man like you on the payroll. PR, spin, you know. To deal with all the fake news and lies.”

What troubles me the most is the side effects of Covid-19 pandemic is causing in many aspects: domestic violence, non-Covid-19 deaths (mainly heart failure and oncologic diseases), child abuse, and murder.

Now this came as a bit of a surprise:

A young 9-year-old girl was killed by her father and stepmother in Peniche, Leiria's district. This poor little girl was in agony for 13 hours.

“Well, it looks to me like you have a lot of help already, Don. There must be a dozen people at least behind you at every photo shoot.”

The murder inquiry found that the child had been brutally beaten and asphyxiated by her father.

A big heavy sigh came down the phone.

This is just horrible!

“Yeah, well, a lot of those guys are ratting out on me now. I don’t like the way that McMaster bulldog guy looks at me, for one thing. Or they’re incompetent, or both. Can’t trust any of them. It’s a tough job, LT. Sometimes, you know, I … I feel pretty much alone. It’s a lonely job, this president thing.”

https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/girl-9-found-dead-field-22007874

“But”, I reminded him, you have your family, don’t you?”

Local time: 00:01

“Sure, I have Sweetypoops to help me, mostly. And Mel. Freddo, sorry, I mean Donald, isn’t much use to anyone, though. And the kid, well, the kid’s just a kid. Hey, you know, I even have to make an appointment to see that kid, because he’s always busy being fitted for another suit. So think what he’ll be like when he grows up. Now I’m President, I can’t be with him much anyway, to hang out with him, show him all those Lower East Side tenements I used to go to with my old man collecting rent with a baseball bat. And the rest are just hangers-on. But there’s all this fake news they’re putting out about me all the time. Not just me, though - look what they did to Weinstein. I was watching it all on CNN the other day with Mel:

Masks

I said to her, I said, “These people are the pits with their fake news, hon. They’ve been faking it for years.” Mel was sitting there all pensive looking at footage of the demonstrations. “Me too”, she sighed, which didn’t make a whole lotta sense to me at first, but then she pointed at all those Me Too placards on screen.”

Saw two elderly men today.

“But it’s not just the Americans”, he mused, “I don’t seem to be getting on too good with the rest of the world either.”

One was carrying the mask wrapped around his elbow

“Well”, I corrected him gently.

The other one was wearing the mask on top of his head

“Well …?

Masked men

Well … what?”

Maybe they just didn't want to use the mask, and perhaps the Romanian authorities simply say you "have to wear" a mask, but don't specifically say where you have to wear it. Legal loopholes.

“I just meant …”

Funny

“… thing is, I do my best to be nice to them, and they stab me in the back. It’s not just Mr Chink, either. Take that guy Putin. We arm-wrestled a little, he showed me his six-pack, we were getting on, I even said I’d show him and his Secret Service people around the Pentagon one day, because he asked me if that would be OK. I thought we were getting along fine. Then I told him a joke. I said, “Hey Vlad, I’m gonna tell you the difference between our mafia and the Russian mafia: Ours is, like, “Hey, c’mere Pauly, you leeesen to a-me and leeesen to me a-good, I want you a-take Carlo, Giovanni, Luigi and a-Tony, and you go pick up a-Gina, Maria, Lucia and a-Sofia atta da Metropole, capish?” And the Russian mafia is like, “Komm here Boris Shostokovich, lizzen, I vont you take Igor Terezchenkolovich, Oleg Krasnoperolovovsky, Vladimir Preobrazhendengensky and Feodor … hey, you know what, forgeddit, forgeddit, I do eet myzelf ...” But old Vlad didn’t like that one at all. He got up suddenly, did a few fingertips-to-toes stretches, and said he was heading off for sushi. At ten in the morning!

Maybe they just didn't want to use the mask, and perhaps the Romanian authorities simply say you "have to wear" a mask, but don't specifically say where you have to wear it.

Well, leastways, that’s what I thought he’d said. Turned out he was going to a place by the sea called Sochi.”

It was funny, though.

“And that Macron guy, well, he even showed up to greet me with his old mom. One hot hot chick, lemme tell you. I couldn’t keep my eyes off her standing behind all the cameras at the official handshake. Jeez, I said to him as we sat down for the photos, I gotta tell you, Monsieur, your mom’s a real knockout. What a looker. Don’t spill the beans, but if I weren’t spoken for, I might have tried my luck with her. What a mom, such a mom.” He didn’t answer, just stared at me all sullen. Then he tried to give me a bone-crusher on live TV. You saw that, didn’t you, right when we were sitting there?

I myself wore two overlaid masks today. Just to see how it feels. I'm poly-allergic to various environmental factors.

Jeez, the French are real touchy about their moms. I only meant it as a compliment.”

The Romanian authorities are currently tripping over their own two feet. Less than 48 hours to milder measures.

“They’re all out to get me for sure. Big league. And, before you say anything, the time I was called out for that one, I did actually say “big league”, not “bigly” – they’ve analysed what I said with some spectrograph machine or other. But, you know, I really did mean to say “bigly”!

Two weeks ago I tried to warn some youngsters it wasn't yet time to gather in large groups (there were two groups, one made of 7 people and one made of 11 people). Got myself rebuked for not minding my own business. A woman (not a member of either group) even called me 'racist' because they belonged to a certain minority here and suggested I should mindfully spend some of my own money on masks and gloves for them. Show that I care, that is.

Anyway, in Washington and New York and LA and Frisco the great and the good and all those snooty assholes and hipsters and goddamn mincing faggots laughed at me for being an uneducated shithead, but you know who didn’t laugh at me?

Bernhard Sulzer

Mr and Mrs Nobody from Hickville-in-the-Sticks, that’s who. The uneducated white trash the beautiful people of America have given the finger to for years. A long time ago a foreigner on a corporate trip we arranged to New York asked me what I meant by “white trash”, and I said white trash are people just like me. Except they’re poor. And those people sure know what being uneducated is like among all those muttonheads with all the money. There are some emptinesses you can’t really fill, you know. But you can try. And I’m trying.”

Local time: 17:01

The big man sounded pretty down in the dumps.

Clueless Clowns

“It helps being with Mel, though”, he went on. “I missed her at the beginning, when she had to stay in New York with the kid. After we’d been abroad together a few times pressing the flesh, I told her as we were walking off Air Force One back in Washington: “That went well, honey, you oughta come more often”, and she said “Too true, sweetheart.” So she’s up for it.

in a crazy circus. Too many people are just clueless. And yeah, no one there to tell them how to do it right. Doesn't matter if the news tells us 24 hours how people keep getting infected and die. In one ear, out the other. See it often when I'm out. At the store yesterday this worker, about 18 or 19, had pulled down the mask to his chin while leaning against the check-out lane and chatting away with his friend next to him who wasn't wearing a mask at all while people were walking by them, certainly not keeping a distance of 6 feet.

“I really want to do things for this country, you know. Why should we have to put up with that little Korean butthead?

You can be smart yourself, but that's about it.

I’ll tell you, he’d better watch his fat face, because I might decide that my fellow Americans and I have to make up for dithering over both World Wars by getting into World War III real early, in at the sharp end right from the start.”

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page25.html

“What you mean is you want to be remembered as the President who made America great again, and not the President who made America late again?” I ventured.

Local time: 06:56

I think I hit the spot with that one, because he snorted with laughter.

Some good stuff there, LT, some great stuff. Gonna recommend ya ... you're gonna be huge

“You know, LT, you can do the translations if you like, but I want you on my PR team, man. You could start at a hundred grand if you like. Greenbacks, I mean.”

Thanks for that Merv. Great stuff!

“I’m very sorry, Don”, I said, “but many translators already make one hundred thousand dollars a year. There’s been a lot of talk about it around here recently, in fact. Besides, you must understand I have my social-economic-political-ethical-environmental principles to consider, naturally.”

Local time: 05:56

The man laughed again. “A year!

A very sobering assessment

Listen to this guy!

May 14

No, I meant per month. Like I said, I just have to have a word with the Fed. I’m the President, for crying out loud ...”

Far be it for me to rain on anybody's parade, but:

At my end, for a few seconds the only sounds that could be heard were little puffs of air and my teeth on my lips and tongue as I mouthed “a hundred thousand dollars a month!!!!!!!!” Obviously I couldn’t very well mouth the exclamation marks too, but you get the idea.

'It will be four or five years before Covid-19 is under control, the World Health Organization’s chief scientist predicted on Wednesday, in a bleak assessment of the difficulties that lie ahead.

“… but if you think your principles won’t allow you to come on board, that’s fine too. I respect that. I respect that bigly. You should …”

Many factors will determine how long and to what extent the virus remains a threat, including whether it mutates, what containment measures are put in place and whether an effective vaccine is developed, Soumya Swaminathan told the FT’s Global Boardroom digital conference.

But meanwhile LT was rapidly engaging back-pedal mode:

“I would say in a four to five-year timeframe we could be looking at controlling this,” she said, adding there was “no crystal ball” and the pandemic could “potentially get worse”.

“Actually”, I cut in, “I wouldn’t say they’re, er, carved in marble as such, those principles of mine, you know. Or I can simply put them on hold for a while. Is that, er, a gross figure or a net figure?”

A vaccine “seems for now the best way out”, but there were “lots of ifs and buts” about its efficacy and safety, as well as its production and equitable distribution, she said. A vaccine could also stop working if the virus changed, she added.'

That one really took him over the edge. He must have laughed at that one for a full minute, and when he came back to me again he was huffing and puffing with the sheer effort of speaking:

Read in conjunction with this:

“Ever heard of Leona Helmsley?

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52643682

She was a businesswoman over here back in the day. Worth hundreds and hundreds of millions, but she said once: “We don’t pay taxes. Only the little people pay taxes”. Forget the taxes, LT. You’re talking to a guy who’s never made his tax returns public, and never will.”

It doesn't mean we can't manage the virus, eventually, but it does mean we will have to take every measure possible to prevent it from spreading after lockdowns have been eased. It will only take a small number of people who refuse to wear masks in public or socially distance to trigger further local flare-ups. And it does mean we have to ignore happytalking politicians, everywhere.

“Are you saying”, I asked him slowly, “that you can do something which is basically illegal?

Local time: 12:56

“What I’m saying”, he replied, “is that when the President does it, it is not illegal.”

Thursday 14 May

Well, that certainly sounded familiar. Same old same old. Grand old grand old.

Deaths are up slightly again, but considering all the recent frolicking around bars in our new-found quasi-freedom, now I’m focusing on new contagions, and they’re up by 400 or so. Don’t say I didn’t warn anybody. The police came across several groups of teenagers and their “botellón”, which just means the kids all go to the supermarket and each buy a bottle of rum or whiskey or something, along with some mixers, and then they all sit around on some handy steps or in the park or wherever, with all their bottles in plastic bags, and drink the stuff and smoke dope. Not just here, all over Spain. Except the “botellón” is dodgy these days, because it’s not good for social distancing. One of the groups said they’d been caught in the rain, and that’s why they were sitting there in a street recess, ahem.

“Anyways, you think about it, LT. Me, I gotta vamoose on outta here, amigo. Said I’d ring to see how Mel’s getting on with the two Puerto Rican wrestlers she hired to sort out the exteriors in Mar-a-Lago. Said it would be good PR for me, since these poor guys lost their gym business in the quake over there, you know. She wants to put in some new shrubbery in the garden, and the façade to the rear of the compound is a real mess. Her secretary told me Mel would have one of them hard at work on her bush while the other was busy around back. By the way, this is a secure line, but obviously everything we’ve been talking about is confidential, so don’t say a word to anyone about this conversation, will you?

That Bilbao street I was talking about the other day … apparently some of the bars shut themselves down in the end because, even though they only had 50% of their outside seating available, people just took their drinks and stood around outside next to the tables, or chatting to the people at the tables, and suddenly there were dozens of people everywhere they couldn’t control, and the owners didn’t want to be fined. The mayor of Bilbao said the other day that the fines shouldn’t even be necessary, and it’s just a matter of common sense, which it is. And once people have had a few drinks, what do they do?

Especially to any Russkies.”

They relax, that’s what, and in this country people are much more touchy-feely than in other places, and it’s only a matter of time before we’re back to square one.

“Conversation?

Quarantining in style

What conversation?” I asked.

Seems the president of Madrid’s regional government (neither the Madrid government nor Madrid Town Hall are run by Sánchez's socialist party) has been spending the quarantine in an upmarket hotel. She was diagnosed with the bug a few days after the lockdown came into effect, but has been at the hotel with bug and without for two months now. Usual price 200 yucks a night, but they’ve docked it to only 80. They say she’s paying for it out of her own pocket. Pretty deep pocket. When she was an up-and-coming politician, I read she was living in 60 square metres somewhere (didn’t get on with her dad, apparently). That, however, is not the point now, because there’s some story about a lucrative contract with this hotel chain that’s been farmed out by the Madrid government. Which explains the knockdown price, presumably.

“This one, the one we’ve been … oh yeah, I’m with you now, LT. Right on!

Now there's something I'm never sure about. Is it neither ... nor ... is, or are?

What I mean is this conversation we never had. Later!”

Both sound fine to me. Tom?

I put down the phone.

The way I have it above, plural verb, sounds a teensy bit better to me.

Wednesday 13 May

Friday 15 May

May 13

May 15

176 deaths yesterday, so it’s going up again. There were scenes on the box last night, in Cartagena, Sevilla and a few other cities, showing people with a much too leisurely attitude to their leisure activities, all crowded around the terraces of bars and cafés, where the police had to intervene. Also in the Basque capital Gasteiz (Vitoria). Well, it’s the capital all right because the Basque Government is based there, but they only made it the capital in the 80s. To Basque it up a little, I imagine, since it’s pretty much out in the sticks where they grow all the potatoes. I remember when I first came here I heard complaints from civil servants who’d had to move out there to their new offices. Then again, someone like myself who knows what spud stigma is can identify with the adjective “patatero” used for people and places in that part of the territory.

Deaths and contagions continue to rise amid the downscaling (I rest my case). Poor Basque President Urkullu got the nasty boo-hiss treatment when he visited one of Bilbao’s main hospitals the other day. “Less image, more health – out, out, out!” cried the staff in a vociferous heckling match mostly orchestrated by the main unions. It was a godsend to the Basque Country’s socialists after all the moaning and doom-mongering by his Basque Nationalist Party about the Socialist central government swanning in from the start to take over regional operations without so much as a by-your-leave.

Out running again at 7 am, and in the rain too. Although gently now, because my calf muscle seems to have recovered, but you never know. That was my mistake last week, in fact, because I put on an extra spurt for the home straight at the end, and messed up. I also do a bit of exercise at home afterwards, along the lines of a chap on Spanish television, who does a daily keep-fit lockdown routine in the mornings with broomsticks and bottles of water, bags of chickpeas or whatever as dumbbells. I’ve also cut out a lot of the stupid stuff you end up eating and drinking at home in this situation.

EAJ/PNV is a centre-right formation which has been governing Euskadi practically uninterrupted and practically single-handed too, since the mid-80s – think slightly less grass-rootsy Basque nationalists, with less screeching, more money and better clothes and haircuts. EAJ/PNV stands for Euskal Alderdi Jeltzale/Partido Nacionalista Vasco. They call them the “jeltzales”. You can perceive that “Euskal” is the Basque part, and then “Alderdi” means Party. "Jeltzale" doesn’t mean “Nationalist”, though. Well, not exactly. It’s actually the adjective from a slogan back in the year dot which evolved into an acronym, JELZ - Jaungoikoa Eta Lege Zaharrak, “God and the Old Laws”, which gives you an insight into the mindset. Euskera is a complicated but primitive language, which I’ll address in another post, maybe. Suffice it to say for the moment that God, "Jaungoikoa" (there are some alternative spellings as the language evolved down through the centuries, and in different areas of Euskadi), is a compound word meaning literally “the man above”. You’ve got to admit it’s curious.

I wonder if the 8 pm applause has been dying out in other countries?

Saturday 16 May

It’s been waning here in the last few days. I was out last night, and only saw 4 or 5 other people on balconies, and I hadn't bothered the night before. People are tired of "having" to do it, I suppose, and also the situation has changed: it used to be you were clapping to a mostly empty street and everybody was at home anyway, because nobody was allowed out except for groceries, pharmacies and hospitals, but now it’s a kind of shaky BAU.

May 16

Little hotels

Deaths down a bit, but contagions are up, 40 more than yesterday. Watch them climb even higher next week as incubation periods run their course. Watch supermarket prices shoot up too, but then they’d already made a start, from what I can see on my shopping tickets in the last few weeks.

Senior citizens’ homes have been in the news in the last couple of months. Like everywhere else, the homes are usually plugged as “just like little hotels” to overcome the natural revulsion of the old folks faced with the prospect of ending their days in unfamiliar surroundings among a crowd of strangers in a similar plight. And it helps their children feel much better about sending them there in the first place, and having the parents pay for it too (after all, that money would be coming to them anyway, right?). Because the children are much too busy. They have their lives. They have children. And some of their children have children. And they all have to work. Or they all have holidays. Or this care thing is more of a job for a sister, not one of the lads. Or I don’t live just around the bloody corner, do I?

My pessimistic eye catches many upbeat slogans around me, including a kid’s drawing of a rainbow inside our street door, saying “We’ll get there together”, but the more I think about it, the more I reckon Covid-19, or maybe its strains, is here to stay. State TV is littered with hopeful doo-dah plink-plink-plink tunes and scenes of happy people in the same vein, “We’ll hug each other again”, “We’ll have that cold beer again”, “We’ll go to the cinema again”, “We’ll have our yoga class again”, “We’ll meet again” etc . I’m not so sure.

Or he or she doesn’t even know I’m there (but you know he or she’s there, don’t you?). Or he or she doesn’t even recognise me (but you do, don’t you?). And the place has a round-the-clock medical service (one doctor for maybe a hundred of them). And they even have a Hairdressing Salon, fancy!

Then there's the shop on this very street with a huge felt-tipped message on the window, “Let's take care of our health and everything will be fine”. Which sounds encouraging, but on the other hand this is one of the “Tabacalera” state smoking materials outlets, none of which, curiously, have been closed during this health crisis. Along with food and drink and pharmacies, they were classified as essential establishments. Not that it would have bothered people unduly if they’d pulled down the shutters because, even though the bars and restaurants were closed too until only a few days ago, most newspaper kiosks sell cigarettes as well, as a sideline. Still, it’s always more pleasant to have a vast shelved array of packets of cigarettes, loose tobacco, ciggie papers for rolling it, with or without other substances, lighters with the Basque flag, the Athletic Bilbao colours, Sponge Bob or Michael Jackson on them.

(a must for people in their 80s and 90s). And the staff so pleasant and warm, they hold their hand and talk to them and everything, just like they were family (I actually heard that one once, an irony of the ugliest kind).

Local time: 11:56

The homes were hit hard by the virus at one point and the old people were busy dying but, since the hospitals were stretched to the limit, none of them could be sent there either. People were invited to take charge of their parents at least temporarily to relieve the pressure. Apparently no big rush ensued. Some optimists reckon we’ll be better people after all this is over. Hmm.

A glimpse of hope

The humankind is dying out

We should be confident and optimistic!

No more claps here. I remember people went to their balconies and windows to applaud health professionals at the beginning of this outbreak, but now they seem to be silent (except some jerks who think this appreciation is a kind of a crazy party; the mentality of the anything goes).

The curve seems to have stabilised.

Now, we have a drop of deaths per day compared to March (a total of 1,175 fatalities), but infected cases are rising (almost 29,000).

While it is very painful and heartbreaking that people continue to die from this monster, we can see a decrease in cases these past weeks.

What troubles me the most is the side effects of Covid-19 pandemic is causing in many aspects: domestic violence, non-Covid-19 deaths (mainly heart failure and oncologic diseases), child abuse, and murder.

The other day, while working, I read something, a kind of a "refrán" in Spanish: "si lo que vives no te gusta, acéptalo y pasará rápidamente".

A young 9-year-old girl was killed by her father and stepmother in Peniche, Leiria's district. This poor little girl was in agony for 13 hours.

I don't like the way I am living since this pandemic, but I am accepting this "new normality" life in the hope that coronavirus will come to an end... soon!

The murder inquiry found that the child had been brutally beaten and asphyxiated by her father.

Sunday 17 May

This is just horrible!

May 17

https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/girl-9-found-dead-field-22007874

Only 102 deaths yesterday, but contagions up a little. And crime’s up as well, but then obviously it had plummeted in the last couple of months. Depends what you mean by crime, too – there I meant theft, affrays in the street and the like. Yesterday’s rag had a photo of two ertzainas handcuffing an offender in a black T-shirt and dark trousers against a white wall, for example. Except I remember a photo from months ago with two ertzainas handcuffing a man in a black T-shirt and dark trousers against a white wall, and either this bloke never changes his clothes and always returns to the scene of the crime to get himself arrested in the same place by the same policemen, or it’s the same photo. Anyway, there’s a lot more theft and robbery going on out there.

Local time: 00:01

But there are other crimes. Domestic violence has soared, as being cooped up for most of the day with the family and the youngsters doesn’t improve the mood of anyone predisposed to snarl and growl and shout and give the spouse a tremendous kicking just because it’s Wednesday. Now largely deprived of the privacy of phone calls, a few weeks ago victims who couldn’t take it any more were being advised to nip into the pharmacy or supermarket and tell anyone who could report it properly on their behalf. Me, I mostly just cower in the kitchen, keep my head down, serve the food with trembling hand and hope it won’t be thrown at the wall in disgust. Never a good sign.

Masks

Which reminds me of an amusing story. Not that the foregoing is an amusing topic, but have you never been in one of those situations which starts off all serious, and then deteriorates into a bit of a giggle?

Saw two elderly men today.

You might be at a funeral, say, and at a funeral, necessarily, people remember the person and anecdotes various, so there you might be, remembering old Fred opening a can of lager which had been shaken around a bit, and spraying beer all around himself, and so a little chuckle escapes you, but you look up to find Fred’s widow all dressed in black, those eyes edged with tears glaring angrily at you from the graveside.

One was carrying the mask wrapped around his elbow

Well, that never actually happened to me as such. What did happen to me was when I was a teenager working at a restaurant on the Cold, Wet and Rainy Rock. It was run by 7 or 8 brothers and sisters, and their parents lived in the old house beside it, where the patriarch died. He’d been dying for years, though, and I heard that he’d been a member of the old IRA, and had been shot by the police back in the day, something he never really recovered from. It was a well-known Republican family, especially since our region wasn’t really that way inclined, and in fact the restaurant got bombed once for that reason, if you can call it a reason, back in the 70s.

The other one was wearing the mask on top of his head

I was slicing my onions out in the back when one of the sisters asked me if I’d like to see her father up in the house. My first impulse was to say “Why?

Masked men

He’s dead, isn’t he?”, but there was something about the way she stood there with hands clasped before her, and I thought “Well, Catholics are like that, aren’t they, laying out the corpse, vigil, wake, and all”. So up I went, and there he was lying on the bed in his black suit and tie, with the rosary beads between his fingers. A man and a woman were standing there looking at him, and the woman suddenly said, “Ach, doesn’t he look great, sure?

Maybe they just didn't want to use the mask, and perhaps the Romanian authorities simply say you "have to wear" a mask, but don't specifically say where you have to wear it. Legal loopholes.

Just look at him, lying there all peaceful, like. That wee holiday must have done him a world of good.” Well, I had to leave the room before I burst out laughing. Later on one of the brothers I worked with very closely brought down a whole case of beer for me and two or three others to drink as we worked.

Funny

Actually, that wasn’t the amusing story either. It’s the next bit that’s the serious-becoming-comical story. I felt I had to put a bit of space between the domestic violence part and this part, just to make it crystal clear that I don’t find domestic violence remotely funny. And I don’t …

Maybe they just didn't want to use the mask, and perhaps the Romanian authorities simply say you "have to wear" a mask, but don't specifically say where you have to wear it.

A friend in England arranged an interpreting gig for me once between a feminist organisation here and a similar organisation in the green and pleasant land. My brief was to pick up the four women from their hotel in Bilbao, take them to their counterparts’ offices and do any interpreting that was necessary. I got on well with the Englishwomen during the walk there, although I must admit I was aware of being a mere man among a gaggle of wimmin about to meet another gaggle of wimmin, and so I was watching my step with sexist language and all that. In fact, at one point I remember I used the word “businessmen”, and one of them gently corrected me by saying “… or businesswomen”, but they were friendly enough.

It was funny, though.

At the office, though, the friendliness screeched to a halt. A tall, unfriendly, forbidding woman opened the door. I introduced everyone, and she said “Amaia, our president [not her real name – this is a real organisation which often appears in local and even national media, so I’m not identifying anyone], isn’t here yet, but she will be here shortly.” I translated all this, and then she showed us around the office. There was a door with Amaia’s name on it, and she said, “This is Amaia our president’s office”, and I translated that too. Then she pointed to a photo on the wall. “This is Amaia, our president, receiving an award.” I translated that too. She pointed to another. “This is Amaia, our president, making a speech.” I translated that too. She picked up a mounted figurine. “This is the award given to Amaia, our president.” I translated that too, but I was starting to feel the beginnings of a smile playing around my lips, what with all the references to “Amaia, our president”. I stole a glance at the Englishwomen, and I was relieved to see a few raised eyebrows and quizzical expressions among them, too, so I knew it wasn’t just me.

I myself wore two overlaid masks today. Just to see how it feels. I'm poly-allergic to various environmental factors.

The buzzer went from downstairs. “Ah, that’ll be Amaia, our president,” said the woman. This time I merely nodded at her, and nodded at the others. The woman frowned. “Go on,” she said, “tell them. Tell them that’s Amaia, our president, downstairs.” As you may have surmised, the words “Amaia” and “presidenta” didn’t really require any translation at all by this stage, especially since they were practically the only words being said. Plus, I was beginning to see some shoulders heaving slightly among the Englishwomen and I was doing my best not to grin, but I translated it too. The Englishwomen were all smiling with knitted brows by now.

The Romanian authorities are currently tripping over their own two feet. Less than 48 hours to milder measures.

The office door buzzer went. “That will be Amaia, our president,” announced the tall second-in-command. The other women and myself were beginning to giggle openly as I translated that too. The door opened to reveal a very, very, very short woman framed in the doorway. She stepped inside, surveyed us all, and said “Good morning. I am Amaia, the president.” Well. I could hear one of the English contingent tittering very, very quietly next to me, and I was keeping my mouth shut as best I could so that I didn’t lose it completely.

Two weeks ago I tried to warn some youngsters it wasn't yet time to gather in large groups (there were two groups, one made of 7 people and one made of 11 people). Got myself rebuked for not minding my own business. A woman (not a member of either group) even called me 'racist' because they belonged to a certain minority here and suggested I should mindfully spend some of my own money on masks and gloves for them. Show that I care, that is.

She looked at me in what I can only describe as mild disgust. As I was standing there all tight-lipped, saying not one word to play safe, she said “You’re the interpreter, aren’t you?

Bernhard Sulzer

Well, tell them, tell them who I am. I am Amaia, the president.” All I could do was smile broadly because otherwise I’d have laughed in her face, and I had only just started on what must have been my tenth “Amaia, the president” translation when the tittering beside me developed into a guffaw, and that set me off too, and then the others started in. It was so embarrassing. The look of outrage and anger on Amaia’s face at five foreigners laughing at her for no apparent reason.

Local time: 17:01

At that point another girl appeared and told Amaia that she could do all the translations that morning, so Amaia jumped at the chance and said I could leave, and come back in the afternoon to take the Englishwomen on a culture trip around the city. I didn’t care, because I was getting paid for the day no matter what. I laughed all day long afterwards – even when I met up with the English feminists again in the afternoon, they were still shaking with laughter too.

Clueless Clowns

Monday 18 May

in a crazy circus. Too many people are just clueless. And yeah, no one there to tell them how to do it right. Doesn't matter if the news tells us 24 hours how people keep getting infected and die. In one ear, out the other. See it often when I'm out. At the store yesterday this worker, about 18 or 19, had pulled down the mask to his chin while leaning against the check-out lane and chatting away with his friend next to him who wasn't wearing a mask at all while people were walking by them, certainly not keeping a distance of 6 feet.

May 18

You can be smart yourself, but that's about it.

“No more time restrictions for villages in Bizkaia with populations under 1,000”, crows the headline. So it looks like they can knock themselves out in the sticks round about here. Deaths in Spain yesterday fell below the psychological barrier of 100, and only 7 of them in the Basque Country. Contagion seems to be falling as well. For the moment.

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page25.html

I’ve been counting during my morning runs, trying to come up with a vague percentage of masks + gloves being used by the local population. I feel like a bit of a waz myself running with both gloves and a mask, but really I only use the gloves because I also take down the rubbish before I start my run, which would theoretically necessitate only one glove, but I’d look even dafter with just one, and also to separate the fractions and put them in the different containers I need both of them, and also to buy the newspaper at the end. I did take them off once after getting shot of the rubbish, putting them in my pocket to run, but I only had to put them on again for the newspaper, opening and closing doors etc. But I digress. I reckon maybe 2 people out of 5 wear a mask, and maybe 1 in 5 the gloves. Then again, a lot of those people are simply out walking in the 6-10 am slot, and maybe they took out the rubbish the night before, and don’t buy anything while they’re out.

Local time: 06:56

Down in Madrid they’re none too happy at being excluded for another week or so from Downscaling Phase 1, so they’ve been out demonstrating with their Spanish flags and “We want freedom” placards, mostly in the well-to-do Salamanca district of the city, where people presumably aren’t too used to demos, but other places too. Those placards, incidentally, remind me of the placards seen at demos in Barcelona over the last few years, although for different reasons.

Some good stuff there, LT, some great stuff. Gonna recommend ya ... you're gonna be huge

So, whereas elsewhere the workers organise demonstrations because they have nowhere to get money to spend due to the lockdown, others organise demonstrations because they have nowhere to spend their money due to the lockdown. Bad news for Señor S and his government, under attack from both left and right.

Thanks for that Merv. Great stuff!

Euskera

Local time: 05:56

I said before I’d give you a little introduction to the Basque language, Euskera, so here it is. Not that I claim to be an expert, so any fluent Basque speakers out there should feel free to correct me.

A very sobering assessment

I had been in the Basque Country for about 7 years before I even thought about learning Euskera. Most of the academies here offer 2 hours per day, 5 days a week, although you can do more, or less, but 2 hours a day is standard. My first “from-scratch” class had about 8 or 9 other students of all ages, between 18 and 50-60 years old. Some people were doing it because they were unemployed and got Basque Government grants to do it, others needed it for their jobs in local government, and others like me were doing it out of interest, a challenge, and also simply because I was living in Euskadi.

May 14

After we’d been at it for a month or so, talking to the others (in Spanish) in the class over a glass of wine in the bar afterwards, I said that it was all very well that we had met up in Basque class, but that outside our classes Spanish would still be our language of choice for communication purposes. How wrong I was!

Far be it for me to rain on anybody's parade, but:

After only 3 or 4 months, we would still go to the bar for a drink afterwards to discuss our homework or what we had learned that day, but by now we were discussing it in Basque. It helped that most of the watering holes around that area were run and frequented by Basque speakers.

'It will be four or five years before Covid-19 is under control, the World Health Organization’s chief scientist predicted on Wednesday, in a bleak assessment of the difficulties that lie ahead.

The first thing I noticed about Basque is that it's all the other way round and, a little like German, the verbs are mostly left until the end of the sentence. Like German, it must be a nightmare to interpret. But Basque takes more than one step in that direction. One easy sentence as an example to demonstrate that it’s totally inverted with regard to English, or Spanish, is “I ate an apple” – “Sagar bat jan nuen”, literally “Apple an ate I”. There’s a lot more of that, too, in clauses – “the man who gave me the apple” goes something like “the apple gave to me who the man”.

Many factors will determine how long and to what extent the virus remains a threat, including whether it mutates, what containment measures are put in place and whether an effective vaccine is developed, Soumya Swaminathan told the FT’s Global Boardroom digital conference.

I did German up to O level, so I knew about the way the Germans string word after word together to make long compound words such as Geschwindigkeitsbeschränkungen (hope I got that right – speed limits, as I remember), and Basque does that too, but it sticks in prefixes, suffixes and even infixes. The equivalent of “of”, “a/an”, “for”, “since”, “because” etc. are made part of the same word at the beginning, in the middle or at the end. German translators know there can be a considerable difference in source and target word count in their combination – they'll know much better than me how much – but I’ve seen as much as 40% more words in English translations from Basque.

“I would say in a four to five-year timeframe we could be looking at controlling this,” she said, adding there was “no crystal ball” and the pandemic could “potentially get worse”.

This is exacerbated further by a frighteningly complicated verb system. There are so many verb endings for so many scenarios, and Basque crams so much information into just a few letters. Je te le donne, I give you it (both 4 words) translate as “ematen dizut”, only 2 words. That “dizut” is made up of three parts, what they call “nor-nori-nork”, or what-to whom-who, a mark for what’s given, followed by a mark for the givee, followed by a mark for the giver, “di-zu-t”. And then, just to make it a little harder, they have some quite different endings for all persons when it’s a simple object-subject phrase such as “she loves you”. And then the subjunctive is just too scary to mention.

A vaccine “seems for now the best way out”, but there were “lots of ifs and buts” about its efficacy and safety, as well as its production and equitable distribution, she said. A vaccine could also stop working if the virus changed, she added.'

There’s no V in Basque, no Y and no C, either, all respectively replaced by B, I and K. This province, Vizcaya, is “Bizkaia” in Basque for that reason. Unlike Spanish (well, most parts of Spain), the Z is pronounced like an S, and an S is mostly pronounced SH. Some words which would have a hard C in Spanish, say, “coronavirus”, would have a K in Basque, “koronabirus”, the plural of a noun is denoted by a K at the end, AND any of those “giver” nouns also take a K at the end. Three reasons why a passage in Basque is littered with all those Ks.

Read in conjunction with this:

E.g.

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52643682

https://www.berria.eus/

It doesn't mean we can't manage the virus, eventually, but it does mean we will have to take every measure possible to prevent it from spreading after lockdowns have been eased. It will only take a small number of people who refuse to wear masks in public or socially distance to trigger further local flare-ups. And it does mean we have to ignore happytalking politicians, everywhere.

Betacism

Local time: 12:56

There’s no V in Basque, no Y and no C, either, all respectively replaced by B, I and K. This province, Vizcaya, is “Bizkaia” in Basque for that reason. Unlike Spanish (well, most parts of Spain), the Z is pronounced like an S, and an S is mostly pronounced SH. Some words which would have a C in Spanish, say, “coronavirus”, would have a K in Basque, “koronabirus”, the plural of a noun is denoted by a K at the end, AND any of those “giver” nouns also take a K at the end. Three reasons why a passage in Basque is littered with all those Ks.

Thursday 14 May

I loved this short introduction to Euskara!

Deaths are up slightly again, but considering all the recent frolicking around bars in our new-found quasi-freedom, now I’m focusing on new contagions, and they’re up by 400 or so. Don’t say I didn’t warn anybody. The police came across several groups of teenagers and their “botellón”, which just means the kids all go to the supermarket and each buy a bottle of rum or whiskey or something, along with some mixers, and then they all sit around on some handy steps or in the park or wherever, with all their bottles in plastic bags, and drink the stuff and smoke dope. Not just here, all over Spain. Except the “botellón” is dodgy these days, because it’s not good for social distancing. One of the groups said they’d been caught in the rain, and that’s why they were sitting there in a street recess, ahem.

And I became aware of my "Basque origins"!

That Bilbao street I was talking about the other day … apparently some of the bars shut themselves down in the end because, even though they only had 50% of their outside seating available, people just took their drinks and stood around outside next to the tables, or chatting to the people at the tables, and suddenly there were dozens of people everywhere they couldn’t control, and the owners didn’t want to be fined. The mayor of Bilbao said the other day that the fines shouldn’t even be necessary, and it’s just a matter of common sense, which it is. And once people have had a few drinks, what do they do?

I'm just kidding

They relax, that’s what, and in this country people are much more touchy-feely than in other places, and it’s only a matter of time before we’re back to square one.

Portuguese has both consonants (V and B), but we are known for using what we call in Linguistics the "Betacism", which means changing the V into a B.

Quarantining in style

This occurs in Northern Portugal only, maybe due to the geographic and linguistic proximity between Spain and Portugal, and the lovely Galician-Portuguese (medieval language spoken in Galicia and northern Portugal).

Seems the president of Madrid’s regional government (neither the Madrid government nor Madrid Town Hall are run by Sánchez's socialist party) has been spending the quarantine in an upmarket hotel. She was diagnosed with the bug a few days after the lockdown came into effect, but has been at the hotel with bug and without for two months now. Usual price 200 yucks a night, but they’ve docked it to only 80. They say she’s paying for it out of her own pocket. Pretty deep pocket. When she was an up-and-coming politician, I read she was living in 60 square metres somewhere (didn’t get on with her dad, apparently). That, however, is not the point now, because there’s some story about a lucrative contract with this hotel chain that’s been farmed out by the Madrid government. Which explains the knockdown price, presumably.

We can see these linguistic phenomena in other languages with other consonants, for ex., in Arabic with the P and B (so "Peugeot" sounds like a beautiful "Bijoux", and the same goes for V and F... and a word came into my mind now that can be written with a V and/or a F ("alcova/alcofa") which means "carrycot".

Now there's something I'm never sure about. Is it neither ... nor ... is, or are?

Punks and K

Both sound fine to me. Tom?

May 19

The way I have it above, plural verb, sounds a teensy bit better to me.

Spanish punks also turned all hard "c" sounds into K, as in the Madrid punk band Kaka de Luxe (Alaska was a member). When I lived in Barcelona in the 80s/90s, punks would deturn metro maps so Barcelona read "Karcelona" and the metro stop Roquetes became KRoquetes (although strictly speaking it should probably have become Kroketes).

Friday 15 May

Nothing to do with K, but the anti-Olympic punk slogan was: N O O O O O !

May 15

Realigned

Deaths and contagions continue to rise amid the downscaling (I rest my case). Poor Basque President Urkullu got the nasty boo-hiss treatment when he visited one of Bilbao’s main hospitals the other day. “Less image, more health – out, out, out!” cried the staff in a vociferous heckling match mostly orchestrated by the main unions. It was a godsend to the Basque Country’s socialists after all the moaning and doom-mongering by his Basque Nationalist Party about the Socialist central government swanning in from the start to take over regional operations without so much as a by-your-leave.

The punks' anti-Olympic slogan was sabotaged by Proz automatic alignment: the bottom two "O"s are supposed to line up with the spaces between the top three "O"s to make the Olympic rings.

EAJ/PNV is a centre-right formation which has been governing Euskadi practically uninterrupted and practically single-handed too, since the mid-80s – think slightly less grass-rootsy Basque nationalists, with less screeching, more money and better clothes and haircuts. EAJ/PNV stands for Euskal Alderdi Jeltzale/Partido Nacionalista Vasco. They call them the “jeltzales”. You can perceive that “Euskal” is the Basque part, and then “Alderdi” means Party. "Jeltzale" doesn’t mean “Nationalist”, though. Well, not exactly. It’s actually the adjective from a slogan back in the year dot which evolved into an acronym, JELZ - Jaungoikoa Eta Lege Zaharrak, “God and the Old Laws”, which gives you an insight into the mindset. Euskera is a complicated but primitive language, which I’ll address in another post, maybe. Suffice it to say for the moment that God, "Jaungoikoa" (there are some alternative spellings as the language evolved down through the centuries, and in different areas of Euskadi), is a compound word meaning literally “the man above”. You’ve got to admit it’s curious.

Barcelona - @Anthony

Saturday 16 May

Crikey, everyone seems to have lived in Barcelona in the 80s/90s. I worked in the dire but definitely educational absinthe dive Café Marsella on Sant Pau before, during and after those NOOOOO Olympics. Then I entered the shiny happy world of translation. Sometimes I think the Marsella was much simpler. But it was much simpler in every sense.

May 16

As for the K, it was everywhere at one point. Anarkía, Kaos, Okupa, all the lefties were gagging to use the K. Deputy PM Pablo Iglesias (one of the four, is it?, deputy PMs - how many deputies do you need?) used to rant against the government on a TV show called La Tuerka.

Deaths down a bit, but contagions are up, 40 more than yesterday. Watch them climb even higher next week as incubation periods run their course. Watch supermarket prices shoot up too, but then they’d already made a start, from what I can see on my shopping tickets in the last few weeks.

Tuesday 19 May

My pessimistic eye catches many upbeat slogans around me, including a kid’s drawing of a rainbow inside our street door, saying “We’ll get there together”, but the more I think about it, the more I reckon Covid-19, or maybe its strains, is here to stay. State TV is littered with hopeful doo-dah plink-plink-plink tunes and scenes of happy people in the same vein, “We’ll hug each other again”, “We’ll have that cold beer again”, “We’ll go to the cinema again”, “We’ll have our yoga class again”, “We’ll meet again” etc . I’m not so sure.

Nothing to say today, really. Well, OK, I have - you know you're getting older when you start yearning for the good old days. Two minor examples:

Then there's the shop on this very street with a huge felt-tipped message on the window, “Let's take care of our health and everything will be fine”. Which sounds encouraging, but on the other hand this is one of the “Tabacalera” state smoking materials outlets, none of which, curiously, have been closed during this health crisis. Along with food and drink and pharmacies, they were classified as essential establishments. Not that it would have bothered people unduly if they’d pulled down the shutters because, even though the bars and restaurants were closed too until only a few days ago, most newspaper kiosks sell cigarettes as well, as a sideline. Still, it’s always more pleasant to have a vast shelved array of packets of cigarettes, loose tobacco, ciggie papers for rolling it, with or without other substances, lighters with the Basque flag, the Athletic Bilbao colours, Sponge Bob or Michael Jackson on them.

I bought some toothpaste, and didn't take a proper look at what I was buying, because if I stopped to consider the contents and merits and advantages of all the different brands of toothpaste and all the different types I'd be there all day, and that's just the toothpaste, never mind the washing powder, the jam, the nuts, the cereals, the chickpeas and the rest. It was only when I squeezed it out that I saw it was black. My first thought, and I know it sounds stupid now, but at the time it was what I thought, was that the toothpaste was way past its sell-by date, but then I looked at the tube, and it said "Charcoal - gentle mineral massage" or something or other. So you brush your teeth and it's all greyish initially, but that recedes after a bit of brushing. But ... charcoal toothpaste?

Local time: 11:56

Not that they're a completely new thing to me because I've been wearing them for ages, but why do you need an "L" and an "R" printed on those short sport socks, the ones that barely clear the height of the trainer so it looks as if you aren't wearing any socks down there?

A glimpse of hope

The answer is that, if you put the L sock on the right foot and the R sock on the left, they kind of fit, sort of, if you don't mind an odd-looking pinch on the big toes. But you don't actually need to read the L and the R, because it's still obvious from looking at them which is which. But how come I spent decades with perfectly interchangeable socks, and now I have to think about it?

We should be confident and optimistic!

Is this what they mean by innovation?

The curve seems to have stabilised.

How is innovation helping me here if I have to think a smidgeon more, whereas before there was nothing to think about?

While it is very painful and heartbreaking that people continue to die from this monster, we can see a decrease in cases these past weeks.

Why couldn't they just leave the socks alone?

The other day, while working, I read something, a kind of a "refrán" in Spanish: "si lo que vives no te gusta, acéptalo y pasará rápidamente".

-page26.html

I don't like the way I am living since this pandemic, but I am accepting this "new normality" life in the hope that coronavirus will come to an end... soon!

Wednesday 20 May

Sunday 17 May

May 20

May 17

Deaths yesterday still below 100, but up from 50+ to 80+, and contagion seems to be going down. Again, for the moment.

Only 102 deaths yesterday, but contagions up a little. And crime’s up as well, but then obviously it had plummeted in the last couple of months. Depends what you mean by crime, too – there I meant theft, affrays in the street and the like. Yesterday’s rag had a photo of two ertzainas handcuffing an offender in a black T-shirt and dark trousers against a white wall, for example. Except I remember a photo from months ago with two ertzainas handcuffing a man in a black T-shirt and dark trousers against a white wall, and either this bloke never changes his clothes and always returns to the scene of the crime to get himself arrested in the same place by the same policemen, or it’s the same photo. Anyway, there’s a lot more theft and robbery going on out there.

Meanwhile, we have regional Basque Government elections coming up on 12 July. So does Galicia. With guarantees of proper safety conditions (every time someone says "guarantee" I assume they're lying). OK, so they should have been held in May/June, but do they really think people want elections?

But there are other crimes. Domestic violence has soared, as being cooped up for most of the day with the family and the youngsters doesn’t improve the mood of anyone predisposed to snarl and growl and shout and give the spouse a tremendous kicking just because it’s Wednesday. Now largely deprived of the privacy of phone calls, a few weeks ago victims who couldn’t take it any more were being advised to nip into the pharmacy or supermarket and tell anyone who could report it properly on their behalf. Me, I mostly just cower in the kitchen, keep my head down, serve the food with trembling hand and hope it won’t be thrown at the wall in disgust. Never a good sign.

The expense to choose from a load of tossers who've all been wringing their hands over the last two months and little else, on full salary. And the tossers’ minions and lackeys driving all over the city blaring out their tossy promises (no mass meetings, obviously). The week of the pre-campaign filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. The two weeks of campaign proper filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. Saturday's "reflection day" before the elections the next day filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. Election night filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. The month after the elections filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. Sure, we're up for elections and no mistake.

Which reminds me of an amusing story. Not that the foregoing is an amusing topic, but have you never been in one of those situations which starts off all serious, and then deteriorates into a bit of a giggle?

And, ahead of the elections, nastiness is back. The local socialist boss here is in the paper today, on the pavement surveying the front door of her house on the street parallel to this one yesterday, covered in the red paint someone threw all over it. Why red?

You might be at a funeral, say, and at a funeral, necessarily, people remember the person and anecdotes various, so there you might be, remembering old Fred opening a can of lager which had been shaken around a bit, and spraying beer all around himself, and so a little chuckle escapes you, but you look up to find Fred’s widow all dressed in black, those eyes edged with tears glaring angrily at you from the graveside.

Blood on her hands?

Well, that never actually happened to me as such. What did happen to me was when I was a teenager working at a restaurant on the Cold, Wet and Rainy Rock. It was run by 7 or 8 brothers and sisters, and their parents lived in the old house beside it, where the patriarch died. He’d been dying for years, though, and I heard that he’d been a member of the old IRA, and had been shot by the police back in the day, something he never really recovered from. It was a well-known Republican family, especially since our region wasn’t really that way inclined, and in fact the restaurant got bombed once for that reason, if you can call it a reason, back in the 70s.

Socialist colour?

I was slicing my onions out in the back when one of the sisters asked me if I’d like to see her father up in the house. My first impulse was to say “Why?

Could be either, or both. Hard-line Basque nationalists used to throw red and yellow paint at PNV premises too (in a nod to the colours of the Spanish flag), but I thought they’d stopped doing that, and in fact I can’t remember the last paint-throwing incident.

He’s dead, isn’t he?”, but there was something about the way she stood there with hands clasped before her, and I thought “Well, Catholics are like that, aren’t they, laying out the corpse, vigil, wake, and all”. So up I went, and there he was lying on the bed in his black suit and tie, with the rosary beads between his fingers. A man and a woman were standing there looking at him, and the woman suddenly said, “Ach, doesn’t he look great, sure?

Right royal apple cart

Just look at him, lying there all peaceful, like. That wee holiday must have done him a world of good.” Well, I had to leave the room before I burst out laughing. Later on one of the brothers I worked with very closely brought down a whole case of beer for me and two or three others to drink as we worked.

If you’re browned off with confinement these days, spare a thought for Spain’s most famous prisoner, who’s been in solitary for almost two years as the only male inmate at a female bang-up in Ávila. The King’s naughty bruv-in-law is serving a term of just over 5 years for misappropriation of public funds, although these days he’s allowed out now and again to do some community graft. Good behaviour, see. Difficult to get into trouble in there when it’s only you ...

Actually, that wasn’t the amusing story either. It’s the next bit that’s the serious-becoming-comical story. I felt I had to put a bit of space between the domestic violence part and this part, just to make it crystal clear that I don’t find domestic violence remotely funny. And I don’t …

I wrote the following when he’d been sentenced but before he was sent to jug, and it was only a matter of which particular jug he’d be sent to:

A friend in England arranged an interpreting gig for me once between a feminist organisation here and a similar organisation in the green and pleasant land. My brief was to pick up the four women from their hotel in Bilbao, take them to their counterparts’ offices and do any interpreting that was necessary. I got on well with the Englishwomen during the walk there, although I must admit I was aware of being a mere man among a gaggle of wimmin about to meet another gaggle of wimmin, and so I was watching my step with sexist language and all that. In fact, at one point I remember I used the word “businessmen”, and one of them gently corrected me by saying “… or businesswomen”, but they were friendly enough.

Who would ever have thought, all those years ago, when the dashingly handsome, fresh-faced, vibrant handball star Iñaki Urdangarín swept King Juan Carlos’ daughter Cristina off her feet to become part of the Spanish royal family, that the young beau would one day be on a countdown to a stretch of a few years in clink?

At the office, though, the friendliness screeched to a halt. A tall, unfriendly, forbidding woman opened the door. I introduced everyone, and she said “Amaia, our president [not her real name – this is a real organisation which often appears in local and even national media, so I’m not identifying anyone], isn’t here yet, but she will be here shortly.” I translated all this, and then she showed us around the office. There was a door with Amaia’s name on it, and she said, “This is Amaia our president’s office”, and I translated that too. Then she pointed to a photo on the wall. “This is Amaia, our president, receiving an award.” I translated that too. She pointed to another. “This is Amaia, our president, making a speech.” I translated that too. She picked up a mounted figurine. “This is the award given to Amaia, our president.” I translated that too, but I was starting to feel the beginnings of a smile playing around my lips, what with all the references to “Amaia, our president”. I stole a glance at the Englishwomen, and I was relieved to see a few raised eyebrows and quizzical expressions among them, too, so I knew it wasn’t just me.

And it would seem there’s no get-out-of-jail-free card to be had either.

The buzzer went from downstairs. “Ah, that’ll be Amaia, our president,” said the woman. This time I merely nodded at her, and nodded at the others. The woman frowned. “Go on,” she said, “tell them. Tell them that’s Amaia, our president, downstairs.” As you may have surmised, the words “Amaia” and “presidenta” didn’t really require any translation at all by this stage, especially since they were practically the only words being said. Plus, I was beginning to see some shoulders heaving slightly among the Englishwomen and I was doing my best not to grin, but I translated it too. The Englishwomen were all smiling with knitted brows by now.

Still, it’s not all bad news for a disgraced former Duke. Most people awaiting a lengthy period of heel-cooling in the slammer on serious fraud charges and misuse of public monies are usually in the joint already prior to sentencing. Unless they can find the dosh to post bail. Or unless the beans they might just spill are so damningly sleazy and sleazily damning that certain members of the judiciary or the general state apparatus might hesitate to confirm a prison term, lest the wretched wrongdoers compromise them into the bargain. Anyway, in Iñaki’s case none of this was necessary, and they allowed him to just bide his time as a free man, by way of an exception. Not 100% hoi polloi, then, Urdangarín. Nor is it normal for hoi polloi awaiting sentence in Spain to be allowed to go on living in Switzerland where her indoors ekes out a living as best she can at an international foundation, before the dread moment arrives.

The office door buzzer went. “That will be Amaia, our president,” announced the tall second-in-command. The other women and myself were beginning to giggle openly as I translated that too. The door opened to reveal a very, very, very short woman framed in the doorway. She stepped inside, surveyed us all, and said “Good morning. I am Amaia, the president.” Well. I could hear one of the English contingent tittering very, very quietly next to me, and I was keeping my mouth shut as best I could so that I didn’t lose it completely.

And the word is there’s a further concession in that he gets to choose his own Big House. Fancy that. How does it work?

She looked at me in what I can only describe as mild disgust. As I was standing there all tight-lipped, saying not one word to play safe, she said “You’re the interpreter, aren’t you?

Does a man pop in one day at your plush Swiss pad?

Well, tell them, tell them who I am. I am Amaia, the president.” All I could do was smile broadly because otherwise I’d have laughed in her face, and I had only just started on what must have been my tenth “Amaia, the president” translation when the tittering beside me developed into a guffaw, and that set me off too, and then the others started in. It was so embarrassing. The look of outrage and anger on Amaia’s face at five foreigners laughing at her for no apparent reason.

… “SO pleased to meet you, Mr U. Now, I’m from Penitentiary Prospects … yes, it’s a little sub-department they created a few years ago, quite discreetly too, because of course it’s all rather hush-hush, in fact … mm, yes, to make arrangements for our more upmarket future inmates, you know, and my job is to give you an insight into some of our Special Incarceration Options. We’ve struck off all the tougher, nastier dives, naturally, so you don’t have to worry about lavatory-call privacy, or the Daddy clapping his drug-crazed eyes on the latest likely-looking lad to arrive at the gaff, or vicious knife-fights over needles, tinfoil and spoons for jacking up after lights-out, no, ha-ha, ahem …. Now, I’d just like to run a place called Archidona past you, if you will … haven’t heard of it, have you?

At that point another girl appeared and told Amaia that she could do all the translations that morning, so Amaia jumped at the chance and said I could leave, and come back in the afternoon to take the Englishwomen on a culture trip around the city. I didn’t care, because I was getting paid for the day no matter what. I laughed all day long afterwards – even when I met up with the English feminists again in the afternoon, they were still shaking with laughter too.

… no?

Monday 18 May

… well, it’s a darling little facility down south, brand new, ideal in fact, and quite close to Málaga airport, which I believe has a direct route to Geneva … for your lady wife, of course, though, not for you, obviously, for the time being at least, ha-ha, ahem ... Unfortunately, you see, Archidona got off to a bit of a bad start publicity-wise, when all those tiresome asylum-seekers were shepherded in a while back, do you remember, and then they saw the razor wire and bars and security turrets and snarling, salivating Rottweilers, and realised they were being accommodated in a proper jail, even though, to be fair, it hadn’t actually been opened at that time. But it has a heated pool and everything, all mod cons, and you’d be alongside ordinary decent law-bending citizens like your good self, Mr U, people who simply had a solitary fleeting moment of weakness, madness, recklessness, people whose only crime was bad judgment, people who fell in with the wrong crowd of well-heeled bigshots and politicians through no fault of their own, or were temporarily blinded by overwhelming economic temptation as they contemplated a mesmerising array of potential cookie jars to slip their hands into, to help us achieve our ultimate objective of making a spell at His Majesty’s pleasure as painless as possible for a very different category of prisoner. Now, I don’t know whether you’ve given any thought to wall colourings?

May 18

… for instance, our feng shui experience is that azure is very popular with first offenders, very soothing for people in your position traumatised by an inevitably abrupt change of surroundings, whereas we find that canary yellow can produce quite an energising oomph to get a thumping good start to the day when you’ve found your sea legs, as it were, and it can look quite jolly in the evenings as well, if a few friends happen to drop by with a six-pack or two to hang out and watch the match … as for amenities, well, there’s an extensive range of self-improvement courses you can sign up for … ”

“No more time restrictions for villages in Bizkaia with populations under 1,000”, crows the headline. So it looks like they can knock themselves out in the sticks round about here. Deaths in Spain yesterday fell below the psychological barrier of 100, and only 7 of them in the Basque Country. Contagion seems to be falling as well. For the moment.

His Majesty’s pleasure, indeed. King Felipe VI will be relieved when his sister’s husband finally has to do his bird, because it will confirm that there can be no favouritism on his watch. A step in the right direction to silence any accusations of unseemly nepotism. A bit of spring-cleaning to tidy up the monarchy a little. Especially since his sister got away with what were initially his & her charges. Well, after all, she did have the public prosecutor on her side from the word go. It’s a funny old world.

I’ve been counting during my morning runs, trying to come up with a vague percentage of masks + gloves being used by the local population. I feel like a bit of a waz myself running with both gloves and a mask, but really I only use the gloves because I also take down the rubbish before I start my run, which would theoretically necessitate only one glove, but I’d look even dafter with just one, and also to separate the fractions and put them in the different containers I need both of them, and also to buy the newspaper at the end. I did take them off once after getting shot of the rubbish, putting them in my pocket to run, but I only had to put them on again for the newspaper, opening and closing doors etc. But I digress. I reckon maybe 2 people out of 5 wear a mask, and maybe 1 in 5 the gloves. Then again, a lot of those people are simply out walking in the 6-10 am slot, and maybe they took out the rubbish the night before, and don’t buy anything while they’re out.

Family, eh?

Down in Madrid they’re none too happy at being excluded for another week or so from Downscaling Phase 1, so they’ve been out demonstrating with their Spanish flags and “We want freedom” placards, mostly in the well-to-do Salamanca district of the city, where people presumably aren’t too used to demos, but other places too. Those placards, incidentally, remind me of the placards seen at demos in Barcelona over the last few years, although for different reasons.

How did that song go?: … “Sisters, sisters … O, Lord help the man who comes between me and my sister, and Lord help the sister who comes between me and my dad.” Well, maybe it didn’t go quite like that, but it does remind me of it. Yes, a firm hand was needed, as their Pa himself confirmed way back when he announced pointedly that in Spain “nobody is above the law”. Which might seem a rather ironic backfire now. One of the most urgent questions facing the Spanish government after JC’s mediatically disastrous and embarrassing elephant-culling faux pas in Botswana, which contributed to an inglorious abdication (despite a certain amount of nonchalant palatial whistling in the background), appeared to be how to best protect against any bothersome lawsuits that could be filed against an erstwhile rex suddenly stripped of immunity. I say the task was urgent, because rumour had it there was quite a bit of scope in that area – a paternity claim from a Belgian woman, for instance. And her bruv, too. To paraphrase a Wildean riposte, one of them may be regarded as misfortune, but both of them looks like carelessness. Or, indeed, carefreeness. Still, this has been easily crushed by the courts – totally and utterly impartial and independent courts, I hasten to point out - for the time being. And then people tend to overlook the fact that Urdangarín started cashing in on public funds simply because he was copying what he saw going on around him once he’d made the family circle.

So, whereas elsewhere the workers organise demonstrations because they have nowhere to get money to spend due to the lockdown, others organise demonstrations because they have nowhere to spend their money due to the lockdown. Bad news for Señor S and his government, under attack from both left and right.

No doubt about it, young Iñaki was lapping up knowledge from a past master. A yacht from a group of Spanish businessmen to a keen sailor as the perfect regal gift?

Euskera

Bring it on, except you can’t be sailing every day, of course, what with all those stately affairs of state to attend to in the daily grind of stateliness, and it’s expensive to maintain a luxury craft and keep it berthed up most of the time … but, wait a minute here, why not just donate it to a public trust?

I said before I’d give you a little introduction to the Basque language, Euskera, so here it is. Not that I claim to be an expert, so any fluent Basque speakers out there should feel free to correct me.

Eureka. Let the great unwashed pay for the whole caboodle, but it’s still only you and yours that get to actually use the thing. And why dig into the government’s measly unkingly allowance to buy a car when carmakers up and down the country are falling over themselves to say ‘ello Juan, wanna noo motah?

I had been in the Basque Country for about 7 years before I even thought about learning Euskera. Most of the academies here offer 2 hours per day, 5 days a week, although you can do more, or less, but 2 hours a day is standard. My first “from-scratch” class had about 8 or 9 other students of all ages, between 18 and 50-60 years old. Some people were doing it because they were unemployed and got Basque Government grants to do it, others needed it for their jobs in local government, and others like me were doing it out of interest, a challenge, and also simply because I was living in Euskadi.

Yes, and the biggest most baddest motor of the lot, too, the latest model, with the insurance, customised “JC1” plates if you’re into that kind of thing, an endless supply of road juice, state-of-the-art everything, leather-and-mahogany trim, a drinks cabinet fairly creaking with Cristal, impenetrable tinted windows, because you don’t necessarily want to advertise who’s in there with you when you’re out and about all naughtily incognito like that, do you, no you don’t, you old rogue you, the Full Monty, drive the ruddy thing into the ground for six months or so because what do you care, whereupon they just bring a new one round to the side door at the palace, no questions asked. Yes, Urdangarín saw all this and began to drool and slaver at the potential, but his big mistake was to think he could do it too. The problem with commoners is that, well, they’re so common, aren’t they?

After we’d been at it for a month or so, talking to the others (in Spanish) in the class over a glass of wine in the bar afterwards, I said that it was all very well that we had met up in Basque class, but that outside our classes Spanish would still be our language of choice for communication purposes. How wrong I was!

They start off thinking they have a right to it, and if you give them an inch of leeway they even start believing they were born into it. They get above their station, that’s what they do. And now the other commoner-turned-royal, the King’s own wife, former TV anchor Letizia, also seems to be getting a little too uppity recently. But that’s another story ...

After only 3 or 4 months, we would still go to the bar for a drink afterwards to discuss our homework or what we had learned that day, but by now we were discussing it in Basque. It helped that most of the watering holes around that area were run and frequented by Basque speakers.

Thursday 21 May

The first thing I noticed about Basque is that it's all the other way round and, a little like German, the verbs are mostly left until the end of the sentence. Like German, it must be a nightmare to interpret. But Basque takes more than one step in that direction. One easy sentence as an example to demonstrate that it’s totally inverted with regard to English, or Spanish, is “I ate an apple” – “Sagar bat jan nuen”, literally “Apple an ate I”. There’s a lot more of that, too, in clauses – “the man who gave me the apple” goes something like “the apple gave to me who the man”.

May 21

I did German up to O level, so I knew about the way the Germans string word after word together to make long compound words such as Geschwindigkeitsbeschränkungen (hope I got that right – speed limits, as I remember), and Basque does that too, but it sticks in prefixes, suffixes and even infixes. The equivalent of “of”, “a/an”, “for”, “since”, “because” etc. are made part of the same word at the beginning, in the middle or at the end. German translators know there can be a considerable difference in source and target word count in their combination – they'll know much better than me how much – but I’ve seen as much as 40% more words in English translations from Basque.

Sliding into the crease - too busy with work today. Deaths still under 100, but up all the same, and contagion more or less steady, as I remember. Took a running detour and went past Idoia Mendia's house this morning to take a look-see at the red paint job, but it's all gone, minus a few traces on the wall. Quick on the uptake.

This is exacerbated further by a frighteningly complicated verb system. There are so many verb endings for so many scenarios, and Basque crams so much information into just a few letters. Je te le donne, I give you it (both 4 words) translate as “ematen dizut”, only 2 words. That “dizut” is made up of three parts, what they call “nor-nori-nork”, or what-to whom-who, a mark for what’s given, followed by a mark for the givee, followed by a mark for the giver, “di-zu-t”. And then, just to make it a little harder, they have some quite different endings for all persons when it’s a simple object-subject phrase such as “she loves you”. And then the subjunctive is just too scary to mention.

Just to ram things home, they organised a naughty car convoy the next day to drive past the house, and stopped in the street to sound their horns for a while too. Looks like we're in for some bitter elections.

There’s no V in Basque, no Y and no C, either, all respectively replaced by B, I and K. This province, Vizcaya, is “Bizkaia” in Basque for that reason. Unlike Spanish (well, most parts of Spain), the Z is pronounced like an S, and an S is mostly pronounced SH. Some words which would have a hard C in Spanish, say, “coronavirus”, would have a K in Basque, “koronabirus”, the plural of a noun is denoted by a K at the end, AND any of those “giver” nouns also take a K at the end. Three reasons why a passage in Basque is littered with all those Ks.

I reckon I should provide some background. They're targeting the socialist (government) party in support of a member of ETA, Patxi Ruiz, who's now been in prison for 22 years for the murder of a Pamplona Town Hall councillor, and is currently on hunger-and-thirst strike at a prison down south in Murcia as he leads a protest against the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic in Spanish jails.

E.g.

Local time: 09:53

https://www.berria.eus/

People over here are getting on with their lives.

Betacism

Official reports concerning Covid-19 victims still not to be trusted, as a woman wrote on Facebook she was suffering from acute ovary pain, running a mild fever because of an infection, yet was admitted to a first hospital as "displaying Covid-19 symptoms", having to resort to personally calling a gynecologist to diagnose her properly.

There’s no V in Basque, no Y and no C, either, all respectively replaced by B, I and K. This province, Vizcaya, is “Bizkaia” in Basque for that reason. Unlike Spanish (well, most parts of Spain), the Z is pronounced like an S, and an S is mostly pronounced SH. Some words which would have a C in Spanish, say, “coronavirus”, would have a K in Basque, “koronabirus”, the plural of a noun is denoted by a K at the end, AND any of those “giver” nouns also take a K at the end. Three reasons why a passage in Basque is littered with all those Ks.

Officially, we have to wear masks when in indoor closed spaces (such as supermarkets) and our bodily temperature is checked at the entrance. We may move freely inside our place of residence, no statement needed anymore. However, we do need such a statement if we get out of town - a form stating the purpose of our travel. Small shops only allow 2 or 3 people inside at the same time. With masks. Larger stores are allowed to be opened as long as entering can be done from the outside (no joint commercial spaces). Hairdresser's parlors and dentist's offices are opened provided they follow strict prevention and sanitation measures. Public parks are opened for strolls. Not playgrounds. People started abandoning pets again. And returning to their old habits - leaving trash where they go.

I loved this short introduction to Euskara!

A LOT of people chose not to give a damn anymore and celebrated the relief of measures by going for a picnic in groups - barbecue and beer. Or shopping. Although the official warning says: "no more than 3 people if they do not belong to the same family".

And I became aware of my "Basque origins"!

Last Sunday I decided to go to this storage space I have rented (a garage, actually) - it's full of stuff - to get it all vented and cleaned a bit. It felt so strange.

I'm just kidding

I spend my nights reading and my days helping a great writer on wattpad with the revision of their two novels. Online school with my 11-year old daughter s\*\*ks.

Portuguese has both consonants (V and B), but we are known for using what we call in Linguistics the "Betacism", which means changing the V into a B.

A bit of the same here

This occurs in Northern Portugal only, maybe due to the geographic and linguistic proximity between Spain and Portugal, and the lovely Galician-Portuguese (medieval language spoken in Galicia and northern Portugal).

May 22

We can see these linguistic phenomena in other languages with other consonants, for ex., in Arabic with the P and B (so "Peugeot" sounds like a beautiful "Bijoux", and the same goes for V and F... and a word came into my mind now that can be written with a V and/or a F ("alcova/alcofa") which means "carrycot".

Online school with my 11-year old daughter s\*\*ks.

Punks and K

I believed this only happened here...

May 19

Many Portuguese parents are complaining about remote classes via TV, a distance learning programme, a "method" created by the Ministry of Education. Lessons are being broadcasted on TV channel "RTP Memória" since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Spanish punks also turned all hard "c" sounds into K, as in the Madrid punk band Kaka de Luxe (Alaska was a member). When I lived in Barcelona in the 80s/90s, punks would deturn metro maps so Barcelona read "Karcelona" and the metro stop Roquetes became KRoquetes (although strictly speaking it should probably have become Kroketes).

Online schooling

Nothing to do with K, but the anti-Olympic punk slogan was: N O O O O O !

May 23

Realigned

Schooling via TV was even a bigger fiasco than online classes. Over here, schools closed on March 11th. That was the last day of physical school. Theoretically, March 12th was the day online schooling should have started. The emphasis being on should. Many children in Romania live on or under the poverty line. Their access to modern devices and the Internet is limited or missing altogether. Then, many teachers didn't give a crap about online schooling.

The punks' anti-Olympic slogan was sabotaged by Proz automatic alignment: the bottom two "O"s are supposed to line up with the spaces between the top three "O"s to make the Olympic rings.

But after a month or so, it was decided that they would have to actually prove they had continued their teaching online. Otherwise... they would risk their salaries. It was then that the "dormant" teachers woke up and started flooding their pupils and students with lesson plans, worksheets, and homework. Each teacher chose their own method of online teaching - Facebook, Skype, whatsapp, Zoom, various platforms, you name it. Some actually held video classes. Others communicated in writing. I've read tens of messages from parents, each describing their own situation.

Barcelona - @Anthony

The greatest achievement of online schooling here was to expose the flaws in our educational system. And my, are they major.

Crikey, everyone seems to have lived in Barcelona in the 80s/90s. I worked in the dire but definitely educational absinthe dive Café Marsella on Sant Pau before, during and after those NOOOOO Olympics. Then I entered the shiny happy world of translation. Sometimes I think the Marsella was much simpler. But it was much simpler in every sense.

Sunday 24 May - @expressisverbis @Sorana\_M

As for the K, it was everywhere at one point. Anarkía, Kaos, Okupa, all the lefties were gagging to use the K. Deputy PM Pablo Iglesias (one of the four, is it?, deputy PMs - how many deputies do you need?) used to rant against the government on a TV show called La Tuerka.

May 24

Tuesday 19 May

I watched a documentary last night called The Portuguese Miracle. Despite a bad start when someone flew in to Oporto from China, was it?

Nothing to say today, really. Well, OK, I have - you know you're getting older when you start yearning for the good old days. Two minor examples:

in March and infected many, many people to start it all off, the concentration remained in the North and hardly touched the South, they said, and all basically under control now, all thanks to early reaction, efficiency and common sense. Qualities lacking elsewhere, as we've seen.

I bought some toothpaste, and didn't take a proper look at what I was buying, because if I stopped to consider the contents and merits and advantages of all the different brands of toothpaste and all the different types I'd be there all day, and that's just the toothpaste, never mind the washing powder, the jam, the nuts, the cereals, the chickpeas and the rest. It was only when I squeezed it out that I saw it was black. My first thought, and I know it sounds stupid now, but at the time it was what I thought, was that the toothpaste was way past its sell-by date, but then I looked at the tube, and it said "Charcoal - gentle mineral massage" or something or other. So you brush your teeth and it's all greyish initially, but that recedes after a bit of brushing. But ... charcoal toothpaste?

I didn't see a documentary on Romania, but Sorana\_M is doing quite well at that herself. When she said before that online school with her daughter sucks, I thought she meant it was just a pain with a young girl moping around the house all day and being forced to go to school at home, but I see now it's the system that sucks. Looks like online schooling could do with a bit of an overhaul. Still, as they say over here, that's what elections are for, to punish those who didn't come up to scratch, and to reward those who would have done it much better if they'd only been given the chance to save the country from this disgraceful shame and shameful disgrace, a safe pair of hands (properly gloved), no barefaced lies (just masked lies), why-oh-why, blah-blah etc. etc. etc.

Not that they're a completely new thing to me because I've been wearing them for ages, but why do you need an "L" and an "R" printed on those short sport socks, the ones that barely clear the height of the trainer so it looks as if you aren't wearing any socks down there?

Mervyn:

The answer is that, if you put the L sock on the right foot and the R sock on the left, they kind of fit, sort of, if you don't mind an odd-looking pinch on the big toes. But you don't actually need to read the L and the R, because it's still obvious from looking at them which is which. But how come I spent decades with perfectly interchangeable socks, and now I have to think about it?

As far as I know, the first case appeared in Porto (yes), if my memory serves me right. It is possible, but I can't remember, or I haven't heard it in the news that someone flew from Porto to China. I know a businessman went to an exhibition of shoes abroad and came infected from Italy. I believe he was the patient zero and this case was known on March, 2nd. Also, he was one of the recovered patients later on. On March, 8th, I remember I went to Porto's downtown and the streets were crowded with tourists, and I noticed people, in general, were a bit strange, quieter, worried. As for the swift reaction of the country, I believe it was more the Portuguese's discipline itself that helped (and it is helping) to control the outbreak. (Of course... there are always "supermen" and "superwomen" who brazenly flout the rules). Each Municipality sounded the alarm of this pandemic in the beginning, I recall this too. I feel Portuguese's Government lacks a bit of consistency during all the Ministries/Agencies/Services speech. In the early beginning, every person was deemed to be at high risk, in particular, patients suffering from autoimmune diseases, but since the relaxation of the restrictions, every person whose health conditions require certain care and attention can go to work freely (or forced?). Also, some health professionals were (are) facing some difficulties. Portuguese aren't perfect, and as someone wrote here before that our President is very well-respected and blah blah blah... well, he can't be an example. Right now, I can see some "new normalities" I don't agree with, because they simply can put people at risk again, mainly very young children. The online classes are being a bit criticised. It's something new for everyone, and I believe teachers, students and parents are trying to adapt to this new scenario. However, funny (and at the same time very sad) things happen during these remote classes. In a Portuguese class, a teacher showed a part of Saint Exupéry's novel, "The Little Prince", in Brazilian Portuguese. When someone is European Portuguese native, is studying in Portugal, and learning the basics of his/her mother tongue, I am of the opinion that classes should be handled in European Portuguese. Have a lovely Sunday everyone!

Is this what they mean by innovation?

(PS: I might be criticised for my last opinion, but it's my view, my brain, and my knowledge).

How is innovation helping me here if I have to think a smidgeon more, whereas before there was nothing to think about?

New cases

Why couldn't they just leave the socks alone?

145 new cases yesterday, May 23rd.

-page26.html

213 new cases today, May 24th.

Wednesday 20 May

New outburst at an ice-cream factory in Alba County.

May 20

Covid-19 entrance

Deaths yesterday still below 100, but up from 50+ to 80+, and contagion seems to be going down. Again, for the moment.

Well, Romania is a major workforce exporter for the EU. Though a part of that workforce chose not to be legally employed, so of course they did not have any medical insurance and so. Many Romanians worked in the HoReCa industry - that is hotels, restaurants, catering. Or as "badante" - assisting elders. Italy was one of the favorite destinations. You can find documentaries on this. When the industry closed down, they were forced to return home. And they came home... by the thousands. Easy way for the virus to travel. By plane, by bus, by car. Some people even crossed the border on foot at Nadlac. Friends or relatives were waiting for them on the other side. Of those who returned, some lied about their departure point, claiming they were returning from Germany. Or some other EU country, but not Italy. Then some other countries were labeled as "red flags". And we witnessed another wave of returns. A 14-day quarantine was established - either at home, for those who could do it at home, or in institutionalized facilities, as they called them. Some tenants were not pleased at all and caused destruction. Even fled, trying to get home faster. Penalties were applied by police. At present, all Romanian citizens returning from a foreign country are subjected to the 14-day quarantine.

Meanwhile, we have regional Basque Government elections coming up on 12 July. So does Galicia. With guarantees of proper safety conditions (every time someone says "guarantee" I assume they're lying). OK, so they should have been held in May/June, but do they really think people want elections?

One of the most famous cases here is this.

The expense to choose from a load of tossers who've all been wringing their hands over the last two months and little else, on full salary. And the tossers’ minions and lackeys driving all over the city blaring out their tossy promises (no mass meetings, obviously). The week of the pre-campaign filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. The two weeks of campaign proper filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. Saturday's "reflection day" before the elections the next day filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. Election night filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. The month after the elections filled with coronavirus and elections and the tossers. Sure, we're up for elections and no mistake.

A 60-year old guy, ex-police officer, travels to Israel accompanied by a lady. On February 26th, he returns to Romania and goes on with his life. Following a traditional March 1st custom here, he goes to work - meaning the Public Domain Administration in District 4, Bucharest, and gives "martisoare" to the ladies there (120 people were in the building at that time), shaking hands and exchanging kisses. His wife was employed there as well. On March 5th, he starts feeling sick and goes to a special hospital in Bucharest - special because it belongs to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. When questioned about having traveled abroad, he denies it. Some of the medical staff there get sick and the hospital is closed down.

And, ahead of the elections, nastiness is back. The local socialist boss here is in the paper today, on the pavement surveying the front door of her house on the street parallel to this one yesterday, covered in the red paint someone threw all over it. Why red?

The lady who had accompanied him on his trip to Israel was working in a public office in Bucharest. The office was closed down, 70 people being quarantined.

Blood on her hands?

His son, pregnant daughter-in-law, and little nephew were said to have also been infected. A doctor who had treated him for some other condition was also infected. Other people, having had contact with contacts of this guy or his family, were also infected. Both his son and his daughter-in-law's jobs implied social contact.

Socialist colour?

This is all public information, in case anyone is wondering, and a criminal case against this man was opened. Apart from a 4,000 EUR fine.

Could be either, or both. Hard-line Basque nationalists used to throw red and yellow paint at PNV premises too (in a nod to the colours of the Spanish flag), but I thought they’d stopped doing that, and in fact I can’t remember the last paint-throwing incident.

Cases are falling (?)

Right royal apple cart

I don't know if coronavirus numbers announced by authorities are correct, but I feel the number of daily new COVID-19 deaths and virus cases in the main European countries are falling. Here the situation reports: 30,471 confirmed patients; 7,705 recovered patients; and 1,302 deaths I hope to be here next year, see the world alive and kicking again!... and of course, I need to cut my hair, attend to my medical appointments, etc. My "hippie" hairstyle will live until the end of this year, and doctors only next year... I guess. Instead of a headband, I will be using a "face band"

If you’re browned off with confinement these days, spare a thought for Spain’s most famous prisoner, who’s been in solitary for almost two years as the only male inmate at a female bang-up in Ávila. The King’s naughty bruv-in-law is serving a term of just over 5 years for misappropriation of public funds, although these days he’s allowed out now and again to do some community graft. Good behaviour, see. Difficult to get into trouble in there when it’s only you ...

I hear this fella's quite good

I wrote the following when he’d been sentenced but before he was sent to jug, and it was only a matter of which particular jug he’d be sent to:

May 25

Who would ever have thought, all those years ago, when the dashingly handsome, fresh-faced, vibrant handball star Iñaki Urdangarín swept King Juan Carlos’ daughter Cristina off her feet to become part of the Spanish royal family, that the young beau would one day be on a countdown to a stretch of a few years in clink?

... and of course, I need to cut my hair,

And it would seem there’s no get-out-of-jail-free card to be had either.

https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7a7qi

Still, it’s not all bad news for a disgraced former Duke. Most people awaiting a lengthy period of heel-cooling in the slammer on serious fraud charges and misuse of public monies are usually in the joint already prior to sentencing. Unless they can find the dosh to post bail. Or unless the beans they might just spill are so damningly sleazy and sleazily damning that certain members of the judiciary or the general state apparatus might hesitate to confirm a prison term, lest the wretched wrongdoers compromise them into the bargain. Anyway, in Iñaki’s case none of this was necessary, and they allowed him to just bide his time as a free man, by way of an exception. Not 100% hoi polloi, then, Urdangarín. Nor is it normal for hoi polloi awaiting sentence in Spain to be allowed to go on living in Switzerland where her indoors ekes out a living as best she can at an international foundation, before the dread moment arrives.

A Memorial Day message

And the word is there’s a further concession in that he gets to choose his own Big House. Fancy that. How does it work?

https://uploads.disquscdn.com/images/5332498cec65dd11981cdefd7d7ece6bb54f06329ff1a4d0d0320c72ead19e0d.png

Does a man pop in one day at your plush Swiss pad?

Goes together with this:

… “SO pleased to meet you, Mr U. Now, I’m from Penitentiary Prospects … yes, it’s a little sub-department they created a few years ago, quite discreetly too, because of course it’s all rather hush-hush, in fact … mm, yes, to make arrangements for our more upmarket future inmates, you know, and my job is to give you an insight into some of our Special Incarceration Options. We’ve struck off all the tougher, nastier dives, naturally, so you don’t have to worry about lavatory-call privacy, or the Daddy clapping his drug-crazed eyes on the latest likely-looking lad to arrive at the gaff, or vicious knife-fights over needles, tinfoil and spoons for jacking up after lights-out, no, ha-ha, ahem …. Now, I’d just like to run a place called Archidona past you, if you will … haven’t heard of it, have you?

https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EXlyAa\_XkAQPjIO?format=jpg&name=small

… no?

Tuesday 26 May - a funeral

… well, it’s a darling little facility down south, brand new, ideal in fact, and quite close to Málaga airport, which I believe has a direct route to Geneva … for your lady wife, of course, though, not for you, obviously, for the time being at least, ha-ha, ahem ... Unfortunately, you see, Archidona got off to a bit of a bad start publicity-wise, when all those tiresome asylum-seekers were shepherded in a while back, do you remember, and then they saw the razor wire and bars and security turrets and snarling, salivating Rottweilers, and realised they were being accommodated in a proper jail, even though, to be fair, it hadn’t actually been opened at that time. But it has a heated pool and everything, all mod cons, and you’d be alongside ordinary decent law-bending citizens like your good self, Mr U, people who simply had a solitary fleeting moment of weakness, madness, recklessness, people whose only crime was bad judgment, people who fell in with the wrong crowd of well-heeled bigshots and politicians through no fault of their own, or were temporarily blinded by overwhelming economic temptation as they contemplated a mesmerising array of potential cookie jars to slip their hands into, to help us achieve our ultimate objective of making a spell at His Majesty’s pleasure as painless as possible for a very different category of prisoner. Now, I don’t know whether you’ve given any thought to wall colourings?

May 26

… for instance, our feng shui experience is that azure is very popular with first offenders, very soothing for people in your position traumatised by an inevitably abrupt change of surroundings, whereas we find that canary yellow can produce quite an energising oomph to get a thumping good start to the day when you’ve found your sea legs, as it were, and it can look quite jolly in the evenings as well, if a few friends happen to drop by with a six-pack or two to hang out and watch the match … as for amenities, well, there’s an extensive range of self-improvement courses you can sign up for … ”

I went to one here yesterday evening. An elderly acquaintance’s mother, which made the deceased elderly with stripes – she’d passed the ton, in fact, finally pegging out at 101. Not from coronavirus, from a heart attack, but at that age it doesn’t really matter anyway. As Robert Mitchum said, when someone pointed out that he smoked and drank more than was good for him, “Man's gotta die from somethin', right?”

His Majesty’s pleasure, indeed. King Felipe VI will be relieved when his sister’s husband finally has to do his bird, because it will confirm that there can be no favouritism on his watch. A step in the right direction to silence any accusations of unseemly nepotism. A bit of spring-cleaning to tidy up the monarchy a little. Especially since his sister got away with what were initially his & her charges. Well, after all, she did have the public prosecutor on her side from the word go. It’s a funny old world.

A terrible pity, but a relief too, as people said in hushed tones outside the church. Well, hushed tones because it’s the kind of thing you say in a hushed tone, but everyone wearing masks makes it more hushed and largely unintelligible anyway.

Family, eh?

Two to a pew, that’s the church standard now. Two to every other pew, actually, and one person in the pews inbetween. One at either end of the pew, which were about 5 metres long, and only one person at the centre of the pews behind and in front.

How did that song go?: … “Sisters, sisters … O, Lord help the man who comes between me and my sister, and Lord help the sister who comes between me and my dad.” Well, maybe it didn’t go quite like that, but it does remind me of it. Yes, a firm hand was needed, as their Pa himself confirmed way back when he announced pointedly that in Spain “nobody is above the law”. Which might seem a rather ironic backfire now. One of the most urgent questions facing the Spanish government after JC’s mediatically disastrous and embarrassing elephant-culling faux pas in Botswana, which contributed to an inglorious abdication (despite a certain amount of nonchalant palatial whistling in the background), appeared to be how to best protect against any bothersome lawsuits that could be filed against an erstwhile rex suddenly stripped of immunity. I say the task was urgent, because rumour had it there was quite a bit of scope in that area – a paternity claim from a Belgian woman, for instance. And her bruv, too. To paraphrase a Wildean riposte, one of them may be regarded as misfortune, but both of them looks like carelessness. Or, indeed, carefreeness. Still, this has been easily crushed by the courts – totally and utterly impartial and independent courts, I hasten to point out - for the time being. And then people tend to overlook the fact that Urdangarín started cashing in on public funds simply because he was copying what he saw going on around him once he’d made the family circle.

The priest looked a bit like Selwyn Froggitt. Those of you who don’t know will have to look it up, sorry. Not that I, or anyone else, because I asked afterwards, understood a lot of what he said, because he was talking into the mask on his chin vaguely in the direction of the mike, but the acoustics of the place weren’t great, and my pew was just in front of the loudspeaker, so I was hearing his mumblings twice at once, plus he was wheezing and whistling and hawking throughout it all, and there was one high-pitched whine when I thought he was going to keel over himself.

No doubt about it, young Iñaki was lapping up knowledge from a past master. A yacht from a group of Spanish businessmen to a keen sailor as the perfect regal gift?

He did the old lady proud, though, because most priests have wrapped things up within 30 minutes or less, but this one was just shy of an hour. I’d never been in that particular church before. Jesus looked on balefully from the cross over on the left, and Mary was up on high at the centre of the altarpiece.

Bring it on, except you can’t be sailing every day, of course, what with all those stately affairs of state to attend to in the daily grind of stateliness, and it’s expensive to maintain a luxury craft and keep it berthed up most of the time … but, wait a minute here, why not just donate it to a public trust?

Which reminds me of that film, The Greatest Story Ever Told. Well, maybe you don’t remember the title, but you’ll definitely remember John Wayne as the Roman centurion at the very end, looking up at the cross and saying “Truly, this was the son of God.” Quite surprising at the time from an actor more used to lines such as “Don’t you worry none, Sheriff, we’ll get a posse together and head off all those mean hombres at the pass”.

Eureka. Let the great unwashed pay for the whole caboodle, but it’s still only you and yours that get to actually use the thing. And why dig into the government’s measly unkingly allowance to buy a car when carmakers up and down the country are falling over themselves to say ‘ello Juan, wanna noo motah?

They say that on the first take, Wayne just looked up at the cross and said, beaming widely, “Truly, this was da son of Gaad!” The director came around and said “That was great, John, just fine, but could we possibly do another take, with a bit of awe this time, a little awe, can you do that?”

Yes, and the biggest most baddest motor of the lot, too, the latest model, with the insurance, customised “JC1” plates if you’re into that kind of thing, an endless supply of road juice, state-of-the-art everything, leather-and-mahogany trim, a drinks cabinet fairly creaking with Cristal, impenetrable tinted windows, because you don’t necessarily want to advertise who’s in there with you when you’re out and about all naughtily incognito like that, do you, no you don’t, you old rogue you, the Full Monty, drive the ruddy thing into the ground for six months or so because what do you care, whereupon they just bring a new one round to the side door at the palace, no questions asked. Yes, Urdangarín saw all this and began to drool and slaver at the potential, but his big mistake was to think he could do it too. The problem with commoners is that, well, they’re so common, aren’t they?

Wayne thought about it, said “Sure, I can do that”, and when they’d set up the take and the director cried “Action!”, Wayne looked up at the cross again and said, “Aw, truly, this was da son of Gaad!”

They start off thinking they have a right to it, and if you give them an inch of leeway they even start believing they were born into it. They get above their station, that’s what they do. And now the other commoner-turned-royal, the King’s own wife, former TV anchor Letizia, also seems to be getting a little too uppity recently. But that’s another story ...

Thursday 21 May

Back on form

May 21

Groan!!

Sliding into the crease - too busy with work today. Deaths still under 100, but up all the same, and contagion more or less steady, as I remember. Took a running detour and went past Idoia Mendia's house this morning to take a look-see at the red paint job, but it's all gone, minus a few traces on the wall. Quick on the uptake.

😂😂😂

Just to ram things home, they organised a naughty car convoy the next day to drive past the house, and stopped in the street to sound their horns for a while too. Looks like we're in for some bitter elections.

Local time: 07:48

I reckon I should provide some background. They're targeting the socialist (government) party in support of a member of ETA, Patxi Ruiz, who's now been in prison for 22 years for the murder of a Pamplona Town Hall councillor, and is currently on hunger-and-thirst strike at a prison down south in Murcia as he leads a protest against the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic in Spanish jails.

I am not allowed to leave my country... yet

Local time: 09:53

TonyTK wrote:

People over here are getting on with their lives.

Land borders between Portugal and Spain will remain closed until 15th June, according to the news In the meantime, I think I will take care of this hair.

Official reports concerning Covid-19 victims still not to be trusted, as a woman wrote on Facebook she was suffering from acute ovary pain, running a mild fever because of an infection, yet was admitted to a first hospital as "displaying Covid-19 symptoms", having to resort to personally calling a gynecologist to diagnose her properly.

Local time: 08:48

Officially, we have to wear masks when in indoor closed spaces (such as supermarkets) and our bodily temperature is checked at the entrance. We may move freely inside our place of residence, no statement needed anymore. However, we do need such a statement if we get out of town - a form stating the purpose of our travel. Small shops only allow 2 or 3 people inside at the same time. With masks. Larger stores are allowed to be opened as long as entering can be done from the outside (no joint commercial spaces). Hairdresser's parlors and dentist's offices are opened provided they follow strict prevention and sanitation measures. Public parks are opened for strolls. Not playgrounds. People started abandoning pets again. And returning to their old habits - leaving trash where they go.

Come to sunny Spain

A LOT of people chose not to give a damn anymore and celebrated the relief of measures by going for a picnic in groups - barbecue and beer. Or shopping. Although the official warning says: "no more than 3 people if they do not belong to the same family".

As of 1 July. Time for Spanish sun, sex, sand and sangría again.

Last Sunday I decided to go to this storage space I have rented (a garage, actually) - it's full of stuff - to get it all vented and cleaned a bit. It felt so strange.

Well, maybe not in that order.

I spend my nights reading and my days helping a great writer on wattpad with the revision of their two novels. Online school with my 11-year old daughter s\*\*ks.

First the sun, then sangría because cor blimey, phwoaaarr, worra scorcher on this sand,

A bit of the same here

John, give us another couple of jugs of the same, darling. And then the sex, amid optional tragic balconing larks.

May 22

Or maybe not, because some irresponsible people put just about anything in sangría down there in Torrepardillos, don't they, oh yes they do, and the cheaper and nastier the additives the better, so you might not be in any condition for any sex subsequently, and all that dark purpleness tends to bring your guard down and lower your level of choosiness, say.

Online school with my 11-year old daughter s\*\*ks.

Maybe a more likely combo would be sun, sand, sangría, syphilis and sorriness.

I believed this only happened here...

They'd originally ordered a 14-day quarantine for anyone coming to Spain, so obviously Pete and Marge from Middlesbrough weren't going to come here to sit around in a hotel room with the sprogs for the 2 weeks, were they?

Many Portuguese parents are complaining about remote classes via TV, a distance learning programme, a "method" created by the Ministry of Education. Lessons are being broadcasted on TV channel "RTP Memória" since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Especially as you can't even use the rest of the hotel, just the room.

Online schooling

Might as well put out a few loungers and open a few tins of Newkie Brown on the allotment back in Middlesbrough, right?

May 23

But the hoteliers and restauranteurs and airlines and travel agents and all the rest have been whingeing to the government for ages now, so there are high hopes for the Spanish tourist industry this summer.

Schooling via TV was even a bigger fiasco than online classes. Over here, schools closed on March 11th. That was the last day of physical school. Theoretically, March 12th was the day online schooling should have started. The emphasis being on should. Many children in Romania live on or under the poverty line. Their access to modern devices and the Internet is limited or missing altogether. Then, many teachers didn't give a crap about online schooling.

I just know September's going to be a mess, but at least Melià shareholders will be a little happier.

But after a month or so, it was decided that they would have to actually prove they had continued their teaching online. Otherwise... they would risk their salaries. It was then that the "dormant" teachers woke up and started flooding their pupils and students with lesson plans, worksheets, and homework. Each teacher chose their own method of online teaching - Facebook, Skype, whatsapp, Zoom, various platforms, you name it. Some actually held video classes. Others communicated in writing. I've read tens of messages from parents, each describing their own situation.

Silver linings.

The greatest achievement of online schooling here was to expose the flaws in our educational system. And my, are they major.

Hot temperatures in Portugal

Sunday 24 May - @expressisverbis @Sorana\_M

This past weekend, people discarded their face masks and rubber gloves all over the sand...

May 24

How can people dump this garbage on the beach while we are facing a sanitary crisis?

I watched a documentary last night called The Portuguese Miracle. Despite a bad start when someone flew in to Oporto from China, was it?

Where are the lifeguards with very specific rules on beaches and the bathing season?

in March and infected many, many people to start it all off, the concentration remained in the North and hardly touched the South, they said, and all basically under control now, all thanks to early reaction, efficiency and common sense. Qualities lacking elsewhere, as we've seen.

Most important: Where are common sense and good hygiene habits?

I didn't see a documentary on Romania, but Sorana\_M is doing quite well at that herself. When she said before that online school with her daughter sucks, I thought she meant it was just a pain with a young girl moping around the house all day and being forced to go to school at home, but I see now it's the system that sucks. Looks like online schooling could do with a bit of an overhaul. Still, as they say over here, that's what elections are for, to punish those who didn't come up to scratch, and to reward those who would have done it much better if they'd only been given the chance to save the country from this disgraceful shame and shameful disgrace, a safe pair of hands (properly gloved), no barefaced lies (just masked lies), why-oh-why, blah-blah etc. etc. etc.

I am ashamed...

Mervyn:

@RobinB

As far as I know, the first case appeared in Porto (yes), if my memory serves me right. It is possible, but I can't remember, or I haven't heard it in the news that someone flew from Porto to China. I know a businessman went to an exhibition of shoes abroad and came infected from Italy. I believe he was the patient zero and this case was known on March, 2nd. Also, he was one of the recovered patients later on. On March, 8th, I remember I went to Porto's downtown and the streets were crowded with tourists, and I noticed people, in general, were a bit strange, quieter, worried. As for the swift reaction of the country, I believe it was more the Portuguese's discipline itself that helped (and it is helping) to control the outbreak. (Of course... there are always "supermen" and "superwomen" who brazenly flout the rules). Each Municipality sounded the alarm of this pandemic in the beginning, I recall this too. I feel Portuguese's Government lacks a bit of consistency during all the Ministries/Agencies/Services speech. In the early beginning, every person was deemed to be at high risk, in particular, patients suffering from autoimmune diseases, but since the relaxation of the restrictions, every person whose health conditions require certain care and attention can go to work freely (or forced?). Also, some health professionals were (are) facing some difficulties. Portuguese aren't perfect, and as someone wrote here before that our President is very well-respected and blah blah blah... well, he can't be an example. Right now, I can see some "new normalities" I don't agree with, because they simply can put people at risk again, mainly very young children. The online classes are being a bit criticised. It's something new for everyone, and I believe teachers, students and parents are trying to adapt to this new scenario. However, funny (and at the same time very sad) things happen during these remote classes. In a Portuguese class, a teacher showed a part of Saint Exupéry's novel, "The Little Prince", in Brazilian Portuguese. When someone is European Portuguese native, is studying in Portugal, and learning the basics of his/her mother tongue, I am of the opinion that classes should be handled in European Portuguese. Have a lovely Sunday everyone!

Presumably not Levi jeans, though.

(PS: I might be criticised for my last opinion, but it's my view, my brain, and my knowledge).

Thanks ... May 27

New cases

"Regular reading of inspiring quotes and uplifting words of wisdom have a powerfully beneficial effect on your wellbeing over time."

145 new cases yesterday, May 23rd.

https://www.wow4u.com/page7.html

213 new cases today, May 24th.

Wednesday 27 May

New outburst at an ice-cream factory in Alba County.

May 27

Covid-19 entrance

When is a death not a death?

Well, Romania is a major workforce exporter for the EU. Though a part of that workforce chose not to be legally employed, so of course they did not have any medical insurance and so. Many Romanians worked in the HoReCa industry - that is hotels, restaurants, catering. Or as "badante" - assisting elders. Italy was one of the favorite destinations. You can find documentaries on this. When the industry closed down, they were forced to return home. And they came home... by the thousands. Easy way for the virus to travel. By plane, by bus, by car. Some people even crossed the border on foot at Nadlac. Friends or relatives were waiting for them on the other side. Of those who returned, some lied about their departure point, claiming they were returning from Germany. Or some other EU country, but not Italy. Then some other countries were labeled as "red flags". And we witnessed another wave of returns. A 14-day quarantine was established - either at home, for those who could do it at home, or in institutionalized facilities, as they called them. Some tenants were not pleased at all and caused destruction. Even fled, trying to get home faster. Penalties were applied by police. At present, all Romanian citizens returning from a foreign country are subjected to the 14-day quarantine.

When it hasn’t been counted as a death, that's when.

One of the most famous cases here is this.

A battle of figures has been ongoing at Spain’s Ministry of Health in recent days, with coronavirus deaths that hadn’t been counted as coronavirus deaths, non-coronavirus deaths that hadn’t been counted as non-coronavirus deaths, deaths that might have been coronavirus deaths or simply your run-of-the-mill common-or-garden deaths, 2,000 deaths which had disappeared from the death records and then abruptly reappeared in death records, give or take a few deaths …

A 60-year old guy, ex-police officer, travels to Israel accompanied by a lady. On February 26th, he returns to Romania and goes on with his life. Following a traditional March 1st custom here, he goes to work - meaning the Public Domain Administration in District 4, Bucharest, and gives "martisoare" to the ladies there (120 people were in the building at that time), shaking hands and exchanging kisses. His wife was employed there as well. On March 5th, he starts feeling sick and goes to a special hospital in Bucharest - special because it belongs to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. When questioned about having traveled abroad, he denies it. Some of the medical staff there get sick and the hospital is closed down.

I’ve stopped trying to make sense of it all, mainly because there’s so much information, disinformation and misinformation and people shouting on all sides about deaths that I’d go mad if I had to process it all, but I suspect that deaths are starting to rise again.

The lady who had accompanied him on his trip to Israel was working in a public office in Bucharest. The office was closed down, 70 people being quarantined.

Spain is rushing back to its larger bars with a vengeance, with people queueing for their turn on terraces and inside, but nobody allowed to stand at the bar inside, where it's sitting room only.

His son, pregnant daughter-in-law, and little nephew were said to have also been infected. A doctor who had treated him for some other condition was also infected. Other people, having had contact with contacts of this guy or his family, were also infected. Both his son and his daughter-in-law's jobs implied social contact.

Quite a large establishment around the corner from here reopened this morning, presumably because it’s just that - quite large.

This is all public information, in case anyone is wondering, and a criminal case against this man was opened. Apart from a 4,000 EUR fine.

This place has long been a watering hole for those who work in the government offices and banks and upmarket shops dotted around the city centre.

Cases are falling (?)

It used to have a rather different clientele back in the days when it had a large heavy curtain at the entrance and was frequented by the sinister former chief of police here, Amedo, who apparently closed it down more than once simply so that he could have the place to himself with his cronies and girlfriends in the evenings, at a time when suspected members of ETA were beginning to disappear, both those here and those who had fled across the border to France just in case, people they couldn’t actually pin anything on, so they decided to quietly bump them off instead.

I don't know if coronavirus numbers announced by authorities are correct, but I feel the number of daily new COVID-19 deaths and virus cases in the main European countries are falling. Here the situation reports: 30,471 confirmed patients; 7,705 recovered patients; and 1,302 deaths I hope to be here next year, see the world alive and kicking again!... and of course, I need to cut my hair, attend to my medical appointments, etc. My "hippie" hairstyle will live until the end of this year, and doctors only next year... I guess. Instead of a headband, I will be using a "face band"

Some of them were found buried in lime pits and the like.

I hear this fella's quite good

Amedo did 12 years for it in the end, along with a few others, including some who had been ministers in the socialist government of the time, because according to Amedo he was just following orders from the very top.

May 25

The very very top (PM Felipe González) emerged unscathed, however, but it’s an accusation they still level at him even today, after over 30 years.

... and of course, I need to cut my hair,

Local time: 09:48

https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7a7qi

Yesterday I took my daughter out to get her a pair of sandals. I was absolutely amazed to see a small shopping center had reopened. It hosts several stores and I was still under the impression that such spaces would remain closed. There were guards at the entrance, checking people's temperature. Some buses were really crowded, too, no way one could keep the minimum recommended distance of 1.5 meters. Most people were wearing masks. We then went to Carrefour, to get food supplies. Not so many buyers, all went fine (I hope). Free sanitizer, wipes, and foil gloves were provided.

A Memorial Day message

Whining the blues ...

https://uploads.disquscdn.com/images/5332498cec65dd11981cdefd7d7ece6bb54f06329ff1a4d0d0320c72ead19e0d.png

May 28

Goes together with this:

There were guards at the entrance, checking people's temperature. (...)

https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EXlyAa\_XkAQPjIO?format=jpg&name=small

We then went to Carrefour, to get food supplies. (...)

Tuesday 26 May - a funeral

Free sanitizer, wipes, and foil gloves were provided.

May 26

If it's any consolation:

I went to one here yesterday evening. An elderly acquaintance’s mother, which made the deceased elderly with stripes – she’d passed the ton, in fact, finally pegging out at 101. Not from coronavirus, from a heart attack, but at that age it doesn’t really matter anyway. As Robert Mitchum said, when someone pointed out that he smoked and drank more than was good for him, “Man's gotta die from somethin', right?”

That sounds like people there are paying more attention to what competent (i.e. East Asian) societies are doing to deal with the pandemic.

A terrible pity, but a relief too, as people said in hushed tones outside the church. Well, hushed tones because it’s the kind of thing you say in a hushed tone, but everyone wearing masks makes it more hushed and largely unintelligible anyway.

There is nothing like that here in Berlin.

Two to a pew, that’s the church standard now. Two to every other pew, actually, and one person in the pews inbetween. One at either end of the pew, which were about 5 metres long, and only one person at the centre of the pews behind and in front.

The vast majority of people wear masks when they go inside anywhere (with public transportation seeming to display the largest proportion of people without masks, but even there it is a small minority at this time).

The priest looked a bit like Selwyn Froggitt. Those of you who don’t know will have to look it up, sorry. Not that I, or anyone else, because I asked afterwards, understood a lot of what he said, because he was talking into the mask on his chin vaguely in the direction of the mike, but the acoustics of the place weren’t great, and my pew was just in front of the loudspeaker, so I was hearing his mumblings twice at once, plus he was wheezing and whistling and hawking throughout it all, and there was one high-pitched whine when I thought he was going to keel over himself.

A very small minority, probably way less than 10%, seem to be wearing masks whenever they go out.

He did the old lady proud, though, because most priests have wrapped things up within 30 minutes or less, but this one was just shy of an hour. I’d never been in that particular church before. Jesus looked on balefully from the cross over on the left, and Mary was up on high at the centre of the altarpiece.

You are generally required to take a basket or cart whenever you go into a grocery store, pet store, library, etc., because they use these to keep track of the number of people inside.

Which reminds me of that film, The Greatest Story Ever Told. Well, maybe you don’t remember the title, but you’ll definitely remember John Wayne as the Roman centurion at the very end, looking up at the cross and saying “Truly, this was the son of God.” Quite surprising at the time from an actor more used to lines such as “Don’t you worry none, Sheriff, we’ll get a posse together and head off all those mean hombres at the pass”.

They wipe them down each time, but having everyone who comes in and goes out touch the same things does not seem like a great counting strategy.

They say that on the first take, Wayne just looked up at the cross and said, beaming widely, “Truly, this was da son of Gaad!” The director came around and said “That was great, John, just fine, but could we possibly do another take, with a bit of awe this time, a little awe, can you do that?”

I have almost never noticed anyone who is not at work wearing gloves, and I have never seen or been offered hand sanitizer for when I go around touching stuff in public places.

Wayne thought about it, said “Sure, I can do that”, and when they’d set up the take and the director cried “Action!”, Wayne looked up at the cross again and said, “Aw, truly, this was da son of Gaad!”

No one is taking anyone's temperature, although that is one precaution that I think it might make more sense to let go in a culture where that would be pretty completely socially unacceptable.

Back on form

There have already been demonstrations against the anti-Corona measures, people have also been (sometimes successfully) asking courts to strike them down as unconstitutional, a big shot in the radical-libertarian party (Kubicki) accused the Robert-Koch-Institut (German public health agency) of doctoring its numbers for political purposes, the radical right and conspiracy theorists are also all abuzz with daring feats of innumeracy and illogic ...

Groan!!

More importantly, the actual implementation of most of the practical precautions that have been put in place (such as the plastic shields between customers and clients at supermarkets) seems to be slowly degenerating into a pure formality that can't really be expected to have much effect on the virus's reproduction rate, because people aren't using them in a meaningful way. I assume that the use of masks is also going to decline massively over the next month or two.

😂😂😂

And, while I may be a good mask wearer, there are all kinds of other little things where I find myself undermining my own better intentions and efforts.

Local time: 07:48

The whole situation is kind of depressing, particularly people's hopes about a crisis like this somehow bringing about some kind of rebirth of society or lasting changes - a hope that hardly seems very plausible in the face of the reality pretty unmistakably unfolding around us and within us. ...

I am not allowed to leave my country... yet

To misquote a saying commonly misattributed to Einstein: "The definition of humanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results."

TonyTK wrote:

Thursday 28 May

Land borders between Portugal and Spain will remain closed until 15th June, according to the news In the meantime, I think I will take care of this hair.

To quote Michael in "Whining the blues":

Local time: 08:48

"The whole situation is kind of depressing, particularly people's hopes about a crisis like this somehow bringing about some kind of rebirth of society or lasting change ..."

Come to sunny Spain

My thoughts exactly.

As of 1 July. Time for Spanish sun, sex, sand and sangría again.

There'd been a lot of that optimistic woffle here too, but I reckon people are really becoming increasingly angry, selfish and bitter, more concerned with pointing the finger at a scapegoat, any scapegoat, to vent their rage on, mostly economic rage, and the realisation that those who govern them are certainly not in the same boat those who govern them say they're all in together.

Well, maybe not in that order.

Dominic Cummings is a good example, albeit not so much comings as goings in his case, going up north to get out of the Smoke.

First the sun, then sangría because cor blimey, phwoaaarr, worra scorcher on this sand,

Do as I say, don't do as I do. Why would you even do such a sneaky and immoral, not to mention illegal, thing?

John, give us another couple of jugs of the same, darling. And then the sex, amid optional tragic balconing larks.

Because you think there'll be no payback. And maybe there won't be.

Or maybe not, because some irresponsible people put just about anything in sangría down there in Torrepardillos, don't they, oh yes they do, and the cheaper and nastier the additives the better, so you might not be in any condition for any sex subsequently, and all that dark purpleness tends to bring your guard down and lower your level of choosiness, say.

At the end of the day what concerns human beings above all is the money in their pockets, or the lack of it.

Maybe a more likely combo would be sun, sand, sangría, syphilis and sorriness.

Think back: the shit hit the fan at the end of 2008, leading to calls for belt-tightening all round (apart from the banks and others who have never had to tighten a belt in their lives).

They'd originally ordered a 14-day quarantine for anyone coming to Spain, so obviously Pete and Marge from Middlesbrough weren't going to come here to sit around in a hotel room with the sprogs for the 2 weeks, were they?

Around 2012 when it seemed to be just about getting back on track, more belt-tightening in the usual sectors.

Especially as you can't even use the rest of the hotel, just the room.

And now this, not just a frightening health crisis, but a definite economic crisis to follow.

Might as well put out a few loungers and open a few tins of Newkie Brown on the allotment back in Middlesbrough, right?

Who can be happy about this after over 12 years of belt-tightening?

But the hoteliers and restauranteurs and airlines and travel agents and all the rest have been whingeing to the government for ages now, so there are high hopes for the Spanish tourist industry this summer.

And then they look around and see MPs and ministers and footballers and all the rest who are most definitely in another boat, and in fact some of them even have their own boats, and this puts a damper on their eagerness to gather around a solidarity fire and croon Kumba Yah.

I just know September's going to be a mess, but at least Melià shareholders will be a little happier.

Sanitizer

Silver linings.

Michael Wetzel wrote:

Hot temperatures in Portugal

I'm sorry to hear that. I don't expect much from the Romanian state apparatus as a whole, but...

This past weekend, people discarded their face masks and rubber gloves all over the sand...

I did notice that, when we got off the bus in the Carrefour parking lot, a lady who looked to be in her 50's got on and started spraying the handles and bars with disinfectant. Likewise, in Carrefour, another similar lady gathered the plastic carts (the smaller ones, which have long handles and people drag them around) and sprayed them with disinfectant.

How can people dump this garbage on the beach while we are facing a sanitary crisis?

A security guard had a device which looked like a camera fitted on a tripod - I presume that's the temperature scanner.

Where are the lifeguards with very specific rules on beaches and the bathing season?

Money as a resource is a problem here as well. I'm spending more now than I used to spend before the pandemic.

Most important: Where are common sense and good hygiene habits?

And the food I buy doesn't last. Another problem is... with fresh fruit and vegetables, which were a "must" in my family, the price went up while the quality went down.

I am ashamed...

It's... terrifying to enter a grocery store and to see the produce there has withered away, yet it's still being left on display with the same price tag.

@RobinB

I literally cannot buy quality apples anymore. In Carrefour, my daughter said, "I'd like some apricots, could you please get me some, I miss them".

Presumably not Levi jeans, though.

And I did, albeit they were imported from Turkey.

Thanks ... May 27

They didn't smell like apricots and their lack of taste was baffling.

"Regular reading of inspiring quotes and uplifting words of wisdom have a powerfully beneficial effect on your wellbeing over time."

. May 29

https://www.wow4u.com/page7.html

We have to queue to get into any grocery store here, almost everyone wears a mask inside, there's sanitizer at the entrance which everyone helps themselves to.

Wednesday 27 May

Otherwise the metro is packed at rush hour despite the government asking businesses to stagger their working hours. I'm happy to have my bike.

May 27

They've added more bike lanes, in places where they were really necessary, so cycling is now a whole lot easier compared to last winter when there were suddenly loads more cyclists due to strikes, but no extra lanes, so I kept finding myself stuck behind a slow rider who wobbled far too much for me to overtake safely.

When is a death not a death?

Apparently it's very hard to get hold of bikes, whether new or secondhand, not to mention scooters and other hip devices people get about on these days.

When it hasn’t been counted as a death, that's when.

Friday 29 May – Death in Spain

A battle of figures has been ongoing at Spain’s Ministry of Health in recent days, with coronavirus deaths that hadn’t been counted as coronavirus deaths, non-coronavirus deaths that hadn’t been counted as non-coronavirus deaths, deaths that might have been coronavirus deaths or simply your run-of-the-mill common-or-garden deaths, 2,000 deaths which had disappeared from the death records and then abruptly reappeared in death records, give or take a few deaths …

May 29

I’ve stopped trying to make sense of it all, mainly because there’s so much information, disinformation and misinformation and people shouting on all sides about deaths that I’d go mad if I had to process it all, but I suspect that deaths are starting to rise again.

Yes, death, not deaths. I hadn’t picked up on the news right - only 1 death in both of the last two days. Looks like all that merry togetherness lately outside the four walls of home hasn’t borne its fatal fruits yet, or maybe I’m just plain wrong.

Spain is rushing back to its larger bars with a vengeance, with people queueing for their turn on terraces and inside, but nobody allowed to stand at the bar inside, where it's sitting room only.

Anyway, I’m not going to waste my time on that.

Quite a large establishment around the corner from here reopened this morning, presumably because it’s just that - quite large.

As I mentioned at some point in the past in this diary, I’ve got myself genned up a little more on the contents of trash TV in recent weeks.

This place has long been a watering hole for those who work in the government offices and banks and upmarket shops dotted around the city centre.

What they call “Survivors” over here, filmed in Honduras, and what they call “The Island”, I think, in the UK, has just finished, and the esteemed contestants are now back in Spain, but have to spend their 14 days in quarantine, so they’re wheeled out nightly for a bit of quarantine sport until such time as they can be taken to a TV studio for the usual accusations, shouting and insults.

It used to have a rather different clientele back in the days when it had a large heavy curtain at the entrance and was frequented by the sinister former chief of police here, Amedo, who apparently closed it down more than once simply so that he could have the place to himself with his cronies and girlfriends in the evenings, at a time when suspected members of ETA were beginning to disappear, both those here and those who had fled across the border to France just in case, people they couldn’t actually pin anything on, so they decided to quietly bump them off instead.

These aren’t just any contestants, mind.

Some of them were found buried in lime pits and the like.

Not mere nobodies.

Amedo did 12 years for it in the end, along with a few others, including some who had been ministers in the socialist government of the time, because according to Amedo he was just following orders from the very top.

This is the “celebrity” version.

The very very top (PM Felipe González) emerged unscathed, however, but it’s an accusation they still level at him even today, after over 30 years.

Most of last night’s excitement or dreariness, depending on how you look at it, focused on one of them:

Local time: 09:48

Rocío Jurado made it big as a crooner in the 70s and 80s, and also as an occasional actress.

Yesterday I took my daughter out to get her a pair of sandals. I was absolutely amazed to see a small shopping center had reopened. It hosts several stores and I was still under the impression that such spaces would remain closed. There were guards at the entrance, checking people's temperature. Some buses were really crowded, too, no way one could keep the minimum recommended distance of 1.5 meters. Most people were wearing masks. We then went to Carrefour, to get food supplies. Not so many buyers, all went fine (I hope). Free sanitizer, wipes, and foil gloves were provided.

Big being the word – a big woman with big hair, big … lungs, big voice, big following, big presence, big everything.

Whining the blues ...

So big, in fact, they called her “la más grande”.

May 28

She wasn’t the star contestant on the show last night, though.

There were guards at the entrance, checking people's temperature. (...)

She married a boxer, which was breaking a mould because Spanish crooneresses are supposed to marry bullfighters but, as if she’d realised her protocol mistake, they separated and she duly swapped him for a bullfighter.

We then went to Carrefour, to get food supplies. (...)

She and the boxer had a daughter.

Free sanitizer, wipes, and foil gloves were provided.

Guess what they called her?

If it's any consolation:

Yes, Rocío.

That sounds like people there are paying more attention to what competent (i.e. East Asian) societies are doing to deal with the pandemic.

Kind of stretching out the legend to the next generation.

There is nothing like that here in Berlin.

The boxer's wife died in the mid-noughties, after a last-ditch dash to Houston for cancer treatment amid hushed vigils and minute-by-minute health reports back in Spain and most especially her native Andalusia,

The vast majority of people wear masks when they go inside anywhere (with public transportation seeming to display the largest proportion of people without masks, but even there it is a small minority at this time).

Spain’s cradle of songsters and bullfighters.

A very small minority, probably way less than 10%, seem to be wearing masks whenever they go out.

The bullfighter was already famous for being a bullfighter, and later in life for retiring, and shortly afterwards making comebacks various, and of course for being La Jurado’s hubbie.

You are generally required to take a basket or cart whenever you go into a grocery store, pet store, library, etc., because they use these to keep track of the number of people inside.

He also picked up some unwanted publicity when, tripling the legal alcohol limit but sailing merrily along nevertheless in a car, he ran over and killed a man on a pedestrian crossing.

They wipe them down each time, but having everyone who comes in and goes out touch the same things does not seem like a great counting strategy.

It took them two years to convict him, and even then he only served just over a year.

I have almost never noticed anyone who is not at work wearing gloves, and I have never seen or been offered hand sanitizer for when I go around touching stuff in public places.

Meanwhile, he and Rocío I had adopted two children, one of whom, the girl, went straight to reality shows various to talk about her life, while the other lad went straight to drugs and prison and trouble.

No one is taking anyone's temperature, although that is one precaution that I think it might make more sense to let go in a culture where that would be pretty completely socially unacceptable.

Like father, like son.

There have already been demonstrations against the anti-Corona measures, people have also been (sometimes successfully) asking courts to strike them down as unconstitutional, a big shot in the radical-libertarian party (Kubicki) accused the Robert-Koch-Institut (German public health agency) of doctoring its numbers for political purposes, the radical right and conspiracy theorists are also all abuzz with daring feats of innumeracy and illogic ...

But none of them were last night’s star feature either.

More importantly, the actual implementation of most of the practical precautions that have been put in place (such as the plastic shields between customers and clients at supermarkets) seems to be slowly degenerating into a pure formality that can't really be expected to have much effect on the virus's reproduction rate, because people aren't using them in a meaningful way. I assume that the use of masks is also going to decline massively over the next month or two.

Back to Rocío II, occasionally known as Rocíito, little Rocío, to distinguish her from Spain’s biggest. Rocíito in turn married a Civil Guard, who first hit the news for imposing a cash fine on a French tourist visiting Spain and forgetting to take it out of his own pocket afterwards.

And, while I may be a good mask wearer, there are all kinds of other little things where I find myself undermining my own better intentions and efforts.

The pair also lounged around reality shows for years, particularly after they too separated, and the mutual mudslinging began.

The whole situation is kind of depressing, particularly people's hopes about a crisis like this somehow bringing about some kind of rebirth of society or lasting changes - a hope that hardly seems very plausible in the face of the reality pretty unmistakably unfolding around us and within us. ...

Neither of them was last night’s contestant either.

To misquote a saying commonly misattributed to Einstein: "The definition of humanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results."

Rocío II and the light-fingered copper had a daughter.

Thursday 28 May

Now, can you hazard a guess at what they called her?

To quote Michael in "Whining the blues":

Yes, step forward Rocío III, last night’s star turn.

"The whole situation is kind of depressing, particularly people's hopes about a crisis like this somehow bringing about some kind of rebirth of society or lasting change ..."

Rocío is now a tubby twenty-something whose CV is somewhat sparse, but she is nevertheless, in her own modest words, “the granddaughter of the greatest”, reflected glory being the most powerful asset.

My thoughts exactly.

That is what makes you a celebrity these days. I look forward to the day she too has a daughter.

There'd been a lot of that optimistic woffle here too, but I reckon people are really becoming increasingly angry, selfish and bitter, more concerned with pointing the finger at a scapegoat, any scapegoat, to vent their rage on, mostly economic rage, and the realisation that those who govern them are certainly not in the same boat those who govern them say they're all in together.

Rocío III was the star last night because she had an in-quarantine visit from her gawky oaf of a boyfriend.

Dominic Cummings is a good example, albeit not so much comings as goings in his case, going up north to get out of the Smoke.

But no touching or smooching, of course, so they had fitted up a perspex screen with two pairs of those sleeves researchers put their arms into to handle chemicals inside a cubicle, so that they could at least enjoy a plasticky embrace.

Do as I say, don't do as I do. Why would you even do such a sneaky and immoral, not to mention illegal, thing?

A tearful session ensued. I missed you loads.

Because you think there'll be no payback. And maybe there won't be.

Oh, I missed you too.

At the end of the day what concerns human beings above all is the money in their pockets, or the lack of it.

Did you miss me?

Think back: the shit hit the fan at the end of 2008, leading to calls for belt-tightening all round (apart from the banks and others who have never had to tighten a belt in their lives).

Well, I missed you. Loads.

Around 2012 when it seemed to be just about getting back on track, more belt-tightening in the usual sectors.

Yes, oh yes, I missed you.

And now this, not just a frightening health crisis, but a definite economic crisis to follow.

Pa was looking on proudly from the studio, because he is now a fully-fledged social commentator on the show and doesn’t need to steal from passing motorists anymore.

Who can be happy about this after over 12 years of belt-tightening?

Another contestant on this edition is also distantly related to the family.

And then they look around and see MPs and ministers and footballers and all the rest who are most definitely in another boat, and in fact some of them even have their own boats, and this puts a damper on their eagerness to gather around a solidarity fire and croon Kumba Yah.

I forget how ... I'm always asking when we watch it,

Sanitizer

"Er, isn't this the man who slept with his girlfriend's sister, the one who was in rehab and was married to the politician who was jailed for embezzlement and then switched parties and doesn't speak to his daughter because she's bisexual and had an affair with his sister-in-law, who was on the island and was cuddling up to that young bloke who was going out with the cousin of ....?

Michael Wetzel wrote:

And the first Rocío also had a brother, a wretched paunchy bon vivant who acted as her manager and, evil tongues say, also helped himself to a lot of the money his sister made, and he in turn was married to a woman who is also a commentator on the show, and … generation after generation, this is how stars are born, and that’s only one family, to be praised, cursed, envied, torn apart and vilified between themselves and by others on Spanish realities.

I'm sorry to hear that. I don't expect much from the Romanian state apparatus as a whole, but...

Lots of work today.

I did notice that, when we got off the bus in the Carrefour parking lot, a lady who looked to be in her 50's got on and started spraying the handles and bars with disinfectant. Likewise, in Carrefour, another similar lady gathered the plastic carts (the smaller ones, which have long handles and people drag them around) and sprayed them with disinfectant.

Can’t go into this anymore just now, but I hope to soon.

A security guard had a device which looked like a camera fitted on a tripod - I presume that's the temperature scanner.

What I'm watching on TV

Money as a resource is a problem here as well. I'm spending more now than I used to spend before the pandemic.

What I'm watching on TV: you wouldn't be interested.

And the food I buy doesn't last. Another problem is... with fresh fruit and vegetables, which were a "must" in my family, the price went up while the quality went down.

Why should you be?

It's... terrifying to enter a grocery store and to see the produce there has withered away, yet it's still being left on display with the same price tag.

Er ...

I literally cannot buy quality apples anymore. In Carrefour, my daughter said, "I'd like some apricots, could you please get me some, I miss them".

Interest ...

And I did, albeit they were imported from Turkey.

May 30

They didn't smell like apricots and their lack of taste was baffling.

... in the uninteresting.

. May 29

That's interesting.

We have to queue to get into any grocery store here, almost everyone wears a mask inside, there's sanitizer at the entrance which everyone helps themselves to.

page-28

Otherwise the metro is packed at rush hour despite the government asking businesses to stagger their working hours. I'm happy to have my bike.

Local time: 12:15

They've added more bike lanes, in places where they were really necessary, so cycling is now a whole lot easier compared to last winter when there were suddenly loads more cyclists due to strikes, but no extra lanes, so I kept finding myself stuck behind a slow rider who wobbled far too much for me to overtake safely.

Monday 1 June

Apparently it's very hard to get hold of bikes, whether new or secondhand, not to mention scooters and other hip devices people get about on these days.

Jun 1

Friday 29 May – Death in Spain

You might like to scan this first with an interestometer, if you happen to have access to such an item. You simply load the application with your interests and disinterests, scan it, and the device tells you within seconds whether it’s worth your while even bothering with it. So you can discard it in advance, and don’t have to read it. Otherwise, you have to actually read the thing, and some people become so incensed with the lack of interesting material and the precious time they have wasted while reading it that they then waste even more of their precious time by telling everyone else how uninteresting it all is, so that they don’t waste their time like they did. But here’s the thing – people who might not have read it in the first place then go and read it immediately, out of interest, or even out of disinterest, and they needlessly waste their time as well, thanks to you. So it’s a major time-waster for everyone concerned.

May 29

In the London Bugle I read a sorry tale about one man who didn’t have an interestometer, and paid the price:

Yes, death, not deaths. I hadn’t picked up on the news right - only 1 death in both of the last two days. Looks like all that merry togetherness lately outside the four walls of home hasn’t borne its fatal fruits yet, or maybe I’m just plain wrong.

“It’s so frustrating”, fumed T.I.L., “although I must admit I was out of sorts already because my cat had run off somewhere and couldn’t be found. Anyway, there I was, simply minding other people’s business, and I find this heap of horrible smelly dog-do masquerading as an interesting article, although of course I actually had to read the damn thing before I realised it was of no interest to me whatsoever, and by then it was too late, which put me in an absolutely foul mood, I can tell you, and no pussy either. I’m jolly well going to sign up for one of those interestometers, I can tell you.”

Anyway, I’m not going to waste my time on that.

You have been warned. But if you’ve got this far, it’s not too late to stop now and exercise a little damage limitation. Otherwise …

As I mentioned at some point in the past in this diary, I’ve got myself genned up a little more on the contents of trash TV in recent weeks.

Someone (an expert on tension, presumably, among the parade of experts on this and that we’ve been seeing lately) said that Spain leads its EU counterparts in terms of political tension. It’s not hard to see why. They say some terrible things to each other in parliament, and if that’s the MPs, what hope is there for Paco and Juanito blethering to each other at the bar?

What they call “Survivors” over here, filmed in Honduras, and what they call “The Island”, I think, in the UK, has just finished, and the esteemed contestants are now back in Spain, but have to spend their 14 days in quarantine, so they’re wheeled out nightly for a bit of quarantine sport until such time as they can be taken to a TV studio for the usual accusations, shouting and insults.

A while ago the Spanish Parliament set up a “reconstruction” committee. Sounds good, doesn’t it?

These aren’t just any contestants, mind.

Not to mention hopeful. The idea, as committee chairman Patxi López said, was to reach a consensus across a broad political spectrum to come up with ideas to help reconstruct the country amid a health crisis and serious economic concerns. He added that he trusted interparty bickering would not hinder the committee’s efforts. Some hope.

Not mere nobodies.

Patxi used to be the leader of the Basque socialist party, and was even Lehendakari or Basque President some years ago when the socialists teamed up with unlikely bedfellows in the conservative Partido Popular to keep Basque nationalists away from the reins of power here. It didn't last long. The Invisible Man, I called him, because we didn’t see much of him during his term, and most of the talking was done by the Basque Government’s spokeswoman. Personally I feel he realised early on he wasn’t up to the job, and left it to her to face the media.

This is the “celebrity” version.

He was then made President of the Spanish Parliament, and there too he failed to make his mark, on one occasion famously addressing Pablo Iglesias, the ultra-leftie firebrand, in opposition at the time, as the more familiar “tú”, but everyone else as the more formal “usted”, as is the parliamentary custom. Iglesias was quick to remark on the slight.

Most of last night’s excitement or dreariness, depending on how you look at it, focused on one of them:

Fast forward to a few days ago, and now Patxi is chairing the reconstruction committee, alongside Mr Firebrand, who’s less of a firebrand now that he’s one of the Deputy PMs in the government and has a huge house in Galapagar, the kind of huge house he used to get stuck into others about, but well, power changes people, everyone knows that.

Rocío Jurado made it big as a crooner in the 70s and 80s, and also as an occasional actress.

While answering questions from one of the right-wing Vox MPs, Iglesias went so far as to say that the MP’s problem was that he would really like to lead a coup d’état in Spain, but didn’t dare. The Vox MP was shocked (but to be fair, really it was a welcome gift for him to play the outraged victim) and appealed to Chairman Patxi, but now that Patxi is Iglesias’s friend in the corridors of power, Patxi shrugged the insult off as a mere nothing. The MP concerned decided to leave in protest, and as he made for the exit, Iglesias could be heard saying, “Close the door on your way out.”

Big being the word – a big woman with big hair, big … lungs, big voice, big following, big presence, big everything.

A nice touch. But then, people from Vox and other dissidents have been turning up outside that big house recently to shout at him, and one Partido Popular MP called Iglesias’s father a terrorist the other day too, so you can understand he’s a little on edge at the moment. Even his trademark ponytail seems to have lost a bit of its sheen.

So big, in fact, they called her “la más grande”.

Wrapping up the quarantine diary

She wasn’t the star contestant on the show last night, though.

Not that you can actually wrap up a thread (although they can wrap up a thread or a post on your behalf, as I've found out occasionally!), because it goes on for as long as someone posts on it, but it’s been impinging on my time of late, not nearly as much as Little Translator’s escapades had started to all those years ago, but enough is enough, and I’m going passive on it now, posting whenever the fancy takes me, instead of feeling I have to write the date and then start yacking about whatever comes into my head. And, of course, sometimes one doesn’t have too much to yack about, even me, and it shows.

She married a boxer, which was breaking a mould because Spanish crooneresses are supposed to marry bullfighters but, as if she’d realised her protocol mistake, they separated and she duly swapped him for a bullfighter.

It isn’t even a “quarantine” diary anymore, either. It was different in the first few weeks after mid-March, when it was very real indeed, and we were all cooped up and couldn’t go out except for food or medication or newspapers, and spent a lot of time staring at each other on those balconies. Today I’ve just come back from the Casco, and both it and Bilbao city centre were buzzing just as much as on any sunny Monday afternoon before all this. This time with a lot of masks.

She and the boxer had a daughter.

Thanks for all your contributions, and stay safe!

Guess what they called her?

Local time: 11:15

Yes, Rocío.

A light after dark

Kind of stretching out the legend to the next generation.

Jun 2

The boxer's wife died in the mid-noughties, after a last-ditch dash to Houston for cancer treatment amid hushed vigils and minute-by-minute health reports back in Spain and most especially her native Andalusia,

The topic is a sensitive issue, but it was a pleasure to read this quarantine diary, as well as the many contributions from other members. It was a nice away to share feelings and worries, sympathise with colleagues from all corners of the globe, know each one a little better, and even have a "cuisine diary" with recipes for whetting our appetite and inviting us to cook. The future will bring us positive things!

Spain’s cradle of songsters and bullfighters.

Every cloud has a silver lining. We all need light after dark. All the best!

The bullfighter was already famous for being a bullfighter, and later in life for retiring, and shortly afterwards making comebacks various, and of course for being La Jurado’s hubbie.

Stay safe everyone!

He also picked up some unwanted publicity when, tripling the legal alcohol limit but sailing merrily along nevertheless in a car, he ran over and killed a man on a pedestrian crossing.

Brave new US?

It took them two years to convict him, and even then he only served just over a year.

Jun 3

Meanwhile, he and Rocío I had adopted two children, one of whom, the girl, went straight to reality shows various to talk about her life, while the other lad went straight to drugs and prison and trouble.

I take up Michael's doubts again about the way the virus will change us for the better. Certainly doesn't seem to be changing US for the better - across the pond, I mean. Even you did have a mean job before, now you don't, and now no health because The Wise One said it was just a bit of flu, inject yourself with disinfectant and you'll be good to go, and no nothing. Then there's the rednecking, and these days that means blacknecking too, with cops genuflecting on your airways. It's only a matter of time before Donald tweets that really the man tried to fake his own murder. A vicious assault on a police officer's knee with his neck.

Like father, like son.

Thank you Mervyn for this thread!

But none of them were last night’s star feature either.

Not that you can actually wrap up a thread (although they can wrap up a thread or a post on your behalf, as I've found out occasionally!), because it goes on for as long as someone posts on it, but it’s been impinging on my time of late, not nearly as much as Little Translator’s escapades had started to all those years ago, but enough is enough, and I’m going passive on it now, posting whenever the fancy takes me, instead of feeling I have to write the date and then start yacking about whatever comes into my head. And, of course, sometimes one doesn’t have too much to yack about, even me, and it shows. Thanks for all your contributions, and stay safe!

Back to Rocío II, occasionally known as Rocíito, little Rocío, to distinguish her from Spain’s biggest. Rocíito in turn married a Civil Guard, who first hit the news for imposing a cash fine on a French tourist visiting Spain and forgetting to take it out of his own pocket afterwards.

I liked it very much, especially in the first dark and hardest times for many of us, even if it was difficult for me to understand some of your long posts (with only school knowledge of English, which I got a long time ago...), much more difficult than the "Little translator" which I devoured. But this whole thread I think made feel some of us a bit less alone in this tough situation. Thank you so much!

The pair also lounged around reality shows for years, particularly after they too separated, and the mutual mudslinging began.

And most important that none of the contributors apparently did'nt get the coronavirus so far. Maybe eventually some time we'll find out things that for the moment are not clear, e.g. why some regions and countries have been so badly hit, and other questions we are wondering at (or not, who knows...).

Neither of them was last night’s contestant either.

P.S. Anyway, your tortilla recipe will belong to my menu forever, I think, with or without chorizo (if I can get it). I have cooked it since then nearly once a week.

Rocío II and the light-fingered copper had a daughter.

Best wishes to everyone that has contributed.

Now, can you hazard a guess at what they called her?

Other side of the coin

Yes, step forward Rocío III, last night’s star turn.

Jun 4

Rocío is now a tubby twenty-something whose CV is somewhat sparse, but she is nevertheless, in her own modest words, “the granddaughter of the greatest”, reflected glory being the most powerful asset.

George was murdered for using a forged note, but it's not just policemen who are irritable these days. A couple of days ago an off-duty municipal policeman was in one of the newly-opened bars in Bilbao with his family, and a drunk leaning on the bar (which still isn't allowed, and bars are sit-down only) was pestering the barmaid. The policeman's sister remonstrated with him, and both her and her brother received a torrent of insults, and suddenly this bloke, who had apparently recognised the policeman, up and glassed him all down the side of his face, adding "Better to go out with your gun, because today I'll kill you and all your police mates."

That is what makes you a celebrity these days. I look forward to the day she too has a daughter.

Those inside the bar restrained him and held him until the police arrived, but by that stage the cop was needing twenty-odd stitches all down his cheek and neck. At about the same time he was leaving the hospital, funnily enough the drunk was leaving the police station, pending trial, and no need for bail either. Doh. Given the backlog of court stuff to deal with, this chap will be free to walk the streets for months on end. Ain't life grand?

Rocío III was the star last night because she had an in-quarantine visit from her gawky oaf of a boyfriend.

Jun 5

But no touching or smooching, of course, so they had fitted up a perspex screen with two pairs of those sleeves researchers put their arms into to handle chemicals inside a cubicle, so that they could at least enjoy a plasticky embrace.

... I know black American footballers have done this kind of thing before as a protest, and it might just be me, but does anyone else see something odd about all those policemen and soldiers paying tribute to George Floyd by going down on one knee?

A tearful session ensued. I missed you loads.

I'm nothing if not cynical, but at the very least it makes me wonder whether they're all on the same page.

Oh, I missed you too.

Oliver Pekelharing

Did you miss me?

Dutch to English

Well, I missed you. Loads.

One knee

OK so I tend to be naive about this stuff. I saw that video and thought it was a cool thing to do, so what's to wonder?

Yes, oh yes, I missed you.

Pa was looking on proudly from the studio, because he is now a fully-fledged social commentator on the show and doesn’t need to steal from passing motorists anymore.

If it wasn't sincere it at least helped to defuse a situation (if there was one). But like I say, I'm naive, so I thought they meant it?

Meaning

Another contestant on this edition is also distantly related to the family.

There's meaning it and then there's meaning it ... I just think that it's a hugely ironic opportunity for what is hopefully a vast minority to play along while tittering to themselves imagining a neck under their knee.

I forget how ... I'm always asking when we watch it,

"Er, isn't this the man who slept with his girlfriend's sister, the one who was in rehab and was married to the politician who was jailed for embezzlement and then switched parties and doesn't speak to his daughter because she's bisexual and had an affair with his sister-in-law, who was on the island and was cuddling up to that young bloke who was going out with the cousin of ....?

I do know I'm too cynical, though. On various counts, God help me:

And the first Rocío also had a brother, a wretched paunchy bon vivant who acted as her manager and, evil tongues say, also helped himself to a lot of the money his sister made, and he in turn was married to a woman who is also a commentator on the show, and … generation after generation, this is how stars are born, and that’s only one family, to be praised, cursed, envied, torn apart and vilified between themselves and by others on Spanish realities.

For instance, looking at the solemn memorial ceremony I wondered about all the bros and broettes lined up there. I wondered if they'd have had many qualms about calling in the like of Chauvin and his mates if George had ever come within ten feet of them.

Lots of work today.

George, apparently, had done his fair share of gangstaing, but he had long since reformed, had seen the light and was black on track. Then he lost his job, one day last month he paid for his smokes with a dud bill, and bang. Now ex-wife Roxie wants justice for "a good man". But she won't be getting it from Donald, or maybe even from the courts. I heard a lawyer saying it would be difficult to get a conviction (why, because it was self-defence?

Can’t go into this anymore just now, but I hope to soon.

- why, because crystal-clear footage of slow deliberate murder doesn't count?

What I'm watching on TV

- why, because the cop has an alibi?). She needn't worry about little Gianna and herself, though, because there are plenty of Oprah Winfreys and other high-profile bruddahs and sistahs to take care of them financially for years to come.

What I'm watching on TV: you wouldn't be interested.

And Donald probably isn't finished, either. A man who said he could go on a gunfire spree on Fifth Avenue (as I remember), and still get elected?

Why should you be?

And he did. Get elected, I mean, not go on a gunfire spree - although it hasn't actually come to light or been proven that he went on the spree (yet). So watch out for upcoming tweets: "Maybe Floyd should have taken the time to study the health warning on that packet of cigarettes. Smoking kills." You think I'm joking?

Er ...

You're right of course...

Interest ...

... but then it's the little things that count et cetera.

May 30

Donald will be gone one day, but he'll always have the last laugh because he's a narcissist and everything he says and does is, and always will be, the best thing that anyone has ever said or done. Now you've got me all cynical too.

... in the uninteresting.

Wimmin

That's interesting.

Jun 8

page-28

The usual playground fights in Spain’s parliament in the last few days, as it becomes clear that the government was already aware of the potential of Covid-19 by 8 March, only days before the state of alarm was declared here, considering what had already happened in China and Italy and was just starting in Madrid and the Basque Country, mostly. As you know, 8 March was International Me Too/Feminist/General Wimmin’s day, and as usual there was a huge demo in Madrid, just as the term “social distancing” was becoming popular. The gig was headed by, among others, Irene Montero, aka the Marchioness of Galapagar, Mr Former Firebrand’s wife and also Ministeress for Equality.

Local time: 12:15

“Why did you let us hold this demo?

Monday 1 June

Why didn’t you stop us?

Jun 1

Shame on you!”, whine the usual opposition suspects now. It’s a pity we can’t have two alternative pasts, but what if the government had actually banned it?

You might like to scan this first with an interestometer, if you happen to have access to such an item. You simply load the application with your interests and disinterests, scan it, and the device tells you within seconds whether it’s worth your while even bothering with it. So you can discard it in advance, and don’t have to read it. Otherwise, you have to actually read the thing, and some people become so incensed with the lack of interesting material and the precious time they have wasted while reading it that they then waste even more of their precious time by telling everyone else how uninteresting it all is, so that they don’t waste their time like they did. But here’s the thing – people who might not have read it in the first place then go and read it immediately, out of interest, or even out of disinterest, and they needlessly waste their time as well, thanks to you. So it’s a major time-waster for everyone concerned.

Yes, you know, of course - “Why didn’t you let us hold this demo?

In the London Bugle I read a sorry tale about one man who didn’t have an interestometer, and paid the price:

Why did you stop us?

“It’s so frustrating”, fumed T.I.L., “although I must admit I was out of sorts already because my cat had run off somewhere and couldn’t be found. Anyway, there I was, simply minding other people’s business, and I find this heap of horrible smelly dog-do masquerading as an interesting article, although of course I actually had to read the damn thing before I realised it was of no interest to me whatsoever, and by then it was too late, which put me in an absolutely foul mood, I can tell you, and no pussy either. I’m jolly well going to sign up for one of those interestometers, I can tell you.”

Shame on you!

You have been warned. But if you’ve got this far, it’s not too late to stop now and exercise a little damage limitation. Otherwise …

etc. etc.”

Someone (an expert on tension, presumably, among the parade of experts on this and that we’ve been seeing lately) said that Spain leads its EU counterparts in terms of political tension. It’s not hard to see why. They say some terrible things to each other in parliament, and if that’s the MPs, what hope is there for Paco and Juanito blethering to each other at the bar?

As one journalist wrote a few days ago, the government allowed them to go to the demo, but it also allowed them NOT to go. Sometimes a bit of good old-fashioned common sense is useful in individuals too, and if you know there’s a nasty contagious virus about that has taken only a week or so to travel thousands of kilometres, maybe a better idea to stay at home?

A while ago the Spanish Parliament set up a “reconstruction” committee. Sounds good, doesn’t it?

The journo also mentioned that, if microwave instructions contain a warning these days not to use them as driers for pets, it’s because a woman once found her cat had come in soaked by the rain, put it in the microwave to dry it off, and guess what?

Not to mention hopeful. The idea, as committee chairman Patxi López said, was to reach a consensus across a broad political spectrum to come up with ideas to help reconstruct the country amid a health crisis and serious economic concerns. He added that he trusted interparty bickering would not hinder the committee’s efforts. Some hope.

As the journo said, the woman was an idiot, because who needs to be actually told not to do such a thing, but she sued the company for not warning her about moggies ...

Patxi used to be the leader of the Basque socialist party, and was even Lehendakari or Basque President some years ago when the socialists teamed up with unlikely bedfellows in the conservative Partido Popular to keep Basque nationalists away from the reins of power here. It didn't last long. The Invisible Man, I called him, because we didn’t see much of him during his term, and most of the talking was done by the Basque Government’s spokeswoman. Personally I feel he realised early on he wasn’t up to the job, and left it to her to face the media.

Ahem. The next bit contains a rather risqué double entendre, not for the prudish, and it more or less ends with said lewdish pun, so you won’t be missing anything else if you stop reading RIGHT NOW. Don’t say I didn’t warn you ...

He was then made President of the Spanish Parliament, and there too he failed to make his mark, on one occasion famously addressing Pablo Iglesias, the ultra-leftie firebrand, in opposition at the time, as the more familiar “tú”, but everyone else as the more formal “usted”, as is the parliamentary custom. Iglesias was quick to remark on the slight.

I like to think that the microwave company’s lawyer stood up in court and said, “Mrs Peabody-Smith, what on earth possessed you to use a microwave for this purpose?

Fast forward to a few days ago, and now Patxi is chairing the reconstruction committee, alongside Mr Firebrand, who’s less of a firebrand now that he’s one of the Deputy PMs in the government and has a huge house in Galapagar, the kind of huge house he used to get stuck into others about, but well, power changes people, everyone knows that.

How could you have failed to foresee the consequences?

While answering questions from one of the right-wing Vox MPs, Iglesias went so far as to say that the MP’s problem was that he would really like to lead a coup d’état in Spain, but didn’t dare. The Vox MP was shocked (but to be fair, really it was a welcome gift for him to play the outraged victim) and appealed to Chairman Patxi, but now that Patxi is Iglesias’s friend in the corridors of power, Patxi shrugged the insult off as a mere nothing. The MP concerned decided to leave in protest, and as he made for the exit, Iglesias could be heard saying, “Close the door on your way out.”

Surely there must be dozens of other ways of solving the relatively simple problem of a wet pussy. With or without electronic devices.”

A nice touch. But then, people from Vox and other dissidents have been turning up outside that big house recently to shout at him, and one Partido Popular MP called Iglesias’s father a terrorist the other day too, so you can understand he’s a little on edge at the moment. Even his trademark ponytail seems to have lost a bit of its sheen.

Still reading?

Wrapping up the quarantine diary

I thought you might be. Shame on you etc. etc.

Not that you can actually wrap up a thread (although they can wrap up a thread or a post on your behalf, as I've found out occasionally!), because it goes on for as long as someone posts on it, but it’s been impinging on my time of late, not nearly as much as Little Translator’s escapades had started to all those years ago, but enough is enough, and I’m going passive on it now, posting whenever the fancy takes me, instead of feeling I have to write the date and then start yacking about whatever comes into my head. And, of course, sometimes one doesn’t have too much to yack about, even me, and it shows.

Back with an update

It isn’t even a “quarantine” diary anymore, either. It was different in the first few weeks after mid-March, when it was very real indeed, and we were all cooped up and couldn’t go out except for food or medication or newspapers, and spent a lot of time staring at each other on those balconies. Today I’ve just come back from the Casco, and both it and Bilbao city centre were buzzing just as much as on any sunny Monday afternoon before all this. This time with a lot of masks.

Jun 24

Thanks for all your contributions, and stay safe!

Just touching base post-quarantine, because the pandemic thang has moved on since then. Here the state of alarm ended some days ago, and we are now free to go wherever we want within the State, and by golly everyone's taking advantage too. As the El Rag headline says this morning, there are increasing fears of a resurge as everyone meets up again, particularly in relation to small children and teenagers. I reckon it's got to come, plus there are increasing indications from other countries.

Local time: 11:15

On Saturday morning I was at first cheered and then depressed to finally hear those strangled 7 am post-party cries again - the recently released young things screeching and throwing up pavement pizzas as they emerged from the clubs round about. Mental note: avoid anyone under 30 at all costs for the next three months at least.

A light after dark

But it's not just the young people. The only rule we have now is to wear a mask when social distancing (sorry, Tom) can't be guaranteed. It's only a matter of time, because people left to their own devices concentrate on just that, their own devices, and this is an area which reacted quite early on, so now I'm wondering about Wales (sorry, Chris S) and other places that had a late start.

Jun 2

I've been in groups these days where I was the only one wearing a mask, and I don't mean just our group - I mean most of the others around us. At the beginning of this thread I mentioned that I stood out because I was wearing one, and after months of everybody wearing one, I'm getting that feeling again. Does the mask actually help?

The topic is a sensitive issue, but it was a pleasure to read this quarantine diary, as well as the many contributions from other members. It was a nice away to share feelings and worries, sympathise with colleagues from all corners of the globe, know each one a little better, and even have a "cuisine diary" with recipes for whetting our appetite and inviting us to cook. The future will bring us positive things!

With all the talk about faulty masks, I'm not sure, but it certainly makes me feel safer at the time, and that counts for something in my paranoid head.

Every cloud has a silver lining. We all need light after dark. All the best!

A wee

Stay safe everyone!

Well, although not explicitly mentioned in the article below, it’s clear that going to the optician’s after a nice swim in the town pool the day before lockdown is why Ceredigion has done better than anywhere else in Britain.

Brave new US?

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-53142088

Jun 3

Edit: Not sure what I meant to type for the title of this post but there we go.

I take up Michael's doubts again about the way the virus will change us for the better. Certainly doesn't seem to be changing US for the better - across the pond, I mean. Even you did have a mean job before, now you don't, and now no health because The Wise One said it was just a bit of flu, inject yourself with disinfectant and you'll be good to go, and no nothing. Then there's the rednecking, and these days that means blacknecking too, with cops genuflecting on your airways. It's only a matter of time before Donald tweets that really the man tried to fake his own murder. A vicious assault on a police officer's knee with his neck.

"Caravan and camping sites - all 800 of them - were also encouraged to close by the council"

Thank you Mervyn for this thread!

Chris,

Not that you can actually wrap up a thread (although they can wrap up a thread or a post on your behalf, as I've found out occasionally!), because it goes on for as long as someone posts on it, but it’s been impinging on my time of late, not nearly as much as Little Translator’s escapades had started to all those years ago, but enough is enough, and I’m going passive on it now, posting whenever the fancy takes me, instead of feeling I have to write the date and then start yacking about whatever comes into my head. And, of course, sometimes one doesn’t have too much to yack about, even me, and it shows. Thanks for all your contributions, and stay safe!

I don't know about the swimming pools, but it looks like those bogus caravan-dwelling Taffs you railed at a while ago might finally be run out of Wales!

I liked it very much, especially in the first dark and hardest times for many of us, even if it was difficult for me to understand some of your long posts (with only school knowledge of English, which I got a long time ago...), much more difficult than the "Little translator" which I devoured. But this whole thread I think made feel some of us a bit less alone in this tough situation. Thank you so much!

I don't know if masks really help - maybe a little, but here we had a case where a man has supposedly infected two others while

And most important that none of the contributors apparently did'nt get the coronavirus so far. Maybe eventually some time we'll find out things that for the moment are not clear, e.g. why some regions and countries have been so badly hit, and other questions we are wondering at (or not, who knows...).

1. returning from Afghanistan on a plane (and they did not check him at the airport) and

P.S. Anyway, your tortilla recipe will belong to my menu forever, I think, with or without chorizo (if I can get it). I have cooked it since then nearly once a week.

2. crossing the whole country of Austria on a train while wearing a mask where he is said to have infected 2 other passengers, one of them which had been on the same plane.

Best wishes to everyone that has contributed.

Note to safe: avoid party goers (but I am too old for this); avoid anyone with a backpack or a case. My father thinks that they just opened the borders to save the tourism industry but in France they expect the second wave back in August where they will be able to close the borders again when the summer time is other - but this is just the joke of a maybe uninformed person.

Other side of the coin

In any case, work is back from abroad, within the country it is still very moody.

Jun 4

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary

George was murdered for using a forged note, but it's not just policemen who are irritable these days. A couple of days ago an off-duty municipal policeman was in one of the newly-opened bars in Bilbao with his family, and a drunk leaning on the bar (which still isn't allowed, and bars are sit-down only) was pestering the barmaid. The policeman's sister remonstrated with him, and both her and her brother received a torrent of insults, and suddenly this bloke, who had apparently recognised the policeman, up and glassed him all down the side of his face, adding "Better to go out with your gun, because today I'll kill you and all your police mates."

page29.html

Those inside the bar restrained him and held him until the police arrived, but by that stage the cop was needing twenty-odd stitches all down his cheek and neck. At about the same time he was leaving the hospital, funnily enough the drunk was leaving the police station, pending trial, and no need for bail either. Doh. Given the backlog of court stuff to deal with, this chap will be free to walk the streets for months on end. Ain't life grand?

Local time: 15:18

Jun 5

Lucky you...

... I know black American footballers have done this kind of thing before as a protest, and it might just be me, but does anyone else see something odd about all those policemen and soldiers paying tribute to George Floyd by going down on one knee?

Jun 27

I'm nothing if not cynical, but at the very least it makes me wonder whether they're all on the same page.

Here in Texas, a predictable, devastating disaster is unfolding. In fact, it was already predicted by all the experts, but the governor didn't take any notice.

Oliver Pekelharing

After several weeks of gradual relaxation of the lockdown, cases in Texas are now doubling week-on-week.

Dutch to English

In Houston, which boasts the world's largest medical center (actually dozens of different hospitals and clinics), ICU bed occupancy is already more than 100% and surge capacity is being exhausted rapidly.

One knee

ICU beds are filling up fast here in Austin, too (the 11th largest city in the United States), a situation that's also being repeated in the larger San Antonio and Dallas metropolitan areas.

OK so I tend to be naive about this stuff. I saw that video and thought it was a cool thing to do, so what's to wonder?

The reasons are very simple: Too many people refusing to wear masks (and the refusal of the state governor, Greg Abbott, to impose a mask requirement) and practice social distancing. That's the real reason, not the "increased testing" lies being purveyed by Trump, Pence, and the other Republican killer sheep (seriously: They really do believe that if you test less, there will be fewer infections).

If it wasn't sincere it at least helped to defuse a situation (if there was one). But like I say, I'm naive, so I thought they meant it?

As the saying goes, "If you don't like the mask, you're gonna really hate the ventilator."

Meaning

The United States now has more confirmed cases and more hospitalizations than it did during the height of the crisis in New York and New Jersey. Even though Our Dear Leader is telling everybody that the virus is "dying down".

There's meaning it and then there's meaning it ... I just think that it's a hugely ironic opportunity for what is hopefully a vast minority to play along while tittering to themselves imagining a neck under their knee.

But there is still some humour to be had in the crisis:

I do know I'm too cynical, though. On various counts, God help me:

https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2020/06/24/mask-mandate-florida-anger-erupts-coronavirus-vpx.cnn

For instance, looking at the solemn memorial ceremony I wondered about all the bros and broettes lined up there. I wondered if they'd have had many qualms about calling in the like of Chauvin and his mates if George had ever come within ten feet of them.

We should look on the bright side. Covid-19 has clearly given some people with severe personality disorders a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have their 15 seconds of fame.

George, apparently, had done his fair share of gangstaing, but he had long since reformed, had seen the light and was black on track. Then he lost his job, one day last month he paid for his smokes with a dud bill, and bang. Now ex-wife Roxie wants justice for "a good man". But she won't be getting it from Donald, or maybe even from the courts. I heard a lawyer saying it would be difficult to get a conviction (why, because it was self-defence?

Local time: 22:18

- why, because crystal-clear footage of slow deliberate murder doesn't count?

The little-known 28th Amendment to the Constitooshun

- why, because the cop has an alibi?). She needn't worry about little Gianna and herself, though, because there are plenty of Oprah Winfreys and other high-profile bruddahs and sistahs to take care of them financially for years to come.

Jun 28

And Donald probably isn't finished, either. A man who said he could go on a gunfire spree on Fifth Avenue (as I remember), and still get elected?

"No United States citizen shall be forced to wear a mask." Before you look it up, ask yourself this question - have I ever lied to you?

And he did. Get elected, I mean, not go on a gunfire spree - although it hasn't actually come to light or been proven that he went on the spree (yet). So watch out for upcoming tweets: "Maybe Floyd should have taken the time to study the health warning on that packet of cigarettes. Smoking kills." You think I'm joking?

They've kinda kept it under wraps until now, obviously. POTUS wrote it in at the bottom a few weeks ago with a felt tip when nobody was looking, apparently.

You're right of course...

Less dramatic and definitely less brazen is the situation of Spain, but here too delockdown, deconfinement, new normality or whatever you choose to call it is tiptoeing into resurges all over the State. Now, I'm not the kind of guy who says "I told you so", but, you know, I did tell you so. Please bear with me, because I'm actually gearing up to become one of those presidents of associations holding forth from home in front of their bookcases to the masses looking for scapegoats and blaarghing day and night. Associations, federations, councils, organisations - how many do you need or want?

... but then it's the little things that count et cetera.

Night after night they're there on the box, so I reckon that if that shouty lady in red in Robin's video gets air time, I can as well.

Donald will be gone one day, but he'll always have the last laugh because he's a narcissist and everything he says and does is, and always will be, the best thing that anyone has ever said or done. Now you've got me all cynical too.

Bitter cries on Spain's chat shows, too. You may remember my "Nobodies/Somebodies/Anybodies" post here (Page 7, post 7). The People's Princess, She Who Knows and Speaks Her Truth in Capital Letters, has finally broken her silence to lambast the powers-that-be for their catastrophic management of the crisis. Not that she'd been deliberately silent on the matter - word has it she'd actually been concentrating on lying around in the sun on the verandah to merge in bikini marks, and having a bit of work done to trim up those shave lines - but it always sounds better if you break your silence.

Wimmin

She used that sinister collagen-induced pout of quiet, informed confidence to tell the masses that she Personally Knows people who have Used the Madrid Metro. She Personally Knows people who have been In Hospital and Are Ill. Shame On You, Government, Shame On You. Not Her, you understand, because the People's Princess obviously never travels by metro. These are People She Knows - butcher, baker, candlestickmaker etc.

Jun 8

Last week's gig was unheard of. On this occasion, even the main scandalmonger and high priest of the whole shebang could not take her shrill verbal diarrhoea (and believe me, he sees it being shovelled around by the shedload constantly) and actually walked off his own show, refusing to remain on the same set with the People's Princess.

The usual playground fights in Spain’s parliament in the last few days, as it becomes clear that the government was already aware of the potential of Covid-19 by 8 March, only days before the state of alarm was declared here, considering what had already happened in China and Italy and was just starting in Madrid and the Basque Country, mostly. As you know, 8 March was International Me Too/Feminist/General Wimmin’s day, and as usual there was a huge demo in Madrid, just as the term “social distancing” was becoming popular. The gig was headed by, among others, Irene Montero, aka the Marchioness of Galapagar, Mr Former Firebrand’s wife and also Ministeress for Equality.

They seem to have resolved their differences - (?) it could be that it was recorded prior to the debacle - but the country was relieved/aghast/agog/only vaguely surprised/not surprised at all/exasperated to see the pair of them again on one of those celebrity cook-in programmes later in the week. They both have a busy schedule amid the Corona Chaos, and evidently you can't stay angry for long with people you are utterly, totally and completely dependent on to crush pepper corns and grate cheese for your spagbol against a 60-minute countdown with professional chefs barking at you all the while.

“Why did you let us hold this demo?

Local time: 16:18

Why didn’t you stop us?

Not surprising in the US

Shame on you!”, whine the usual opposition suspects now. It’s a pity we can’t have two alternative pasts, but what if the government had actually banned it?

Here in Texas, a predictable, devastating disaster is unfolding. In fact, it was already predicted by all the experts, but the governor didn't take any notice. [snip]

Yes, you know, of course - “Why didn’t you let us hold this demo?

We should look on the bright side.

Why did you stop us?

Covid-19 has clearly given some people with severe personality disorders a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have their 15 seconds of fame.

Shame on you!

The United States is one of the few countries where climate change denial is a major plank of one of the major political parties, so it is not surprising that in a country where public health officials receive death threats for what in other places would be accepted as factual statements about COVID-19, it is not surprising that the pandemic has not subsided.

etc. etc.”

One a bright note, there haven't been any school shootings since the onset of the pandemic.

As one journalist wrote a few days ago, the government allowed them to go to the demo, but it also allowed them NOT to go. Sometimes a bit of good old-fashioned common sense is useful in individuals too, and if you know there’s a nasty contagious virus about that has taken only a week or so to travel thousands of kilometres, maybe a better idea to stay at home?

You can't fix stupid

The journo also mentioned that, if microwave instructions contain a warning these days not to use them as driers for pets, it’s because a woman once found her cat had come in soaked by the rain, put it in the microwave to dry it off, and guess what?

What politics has to do with anything?

As the journo said, the woman was an idiot, because who needs to be actually told not to do such a thing, but she sued the company for not warning her about moggies ...

Except, of course, that it's all Russia's fault:-)

Ahem. The next bit contains a rather risqué double entendre, not for the prudish, and it more or less ends with said lewdish pun, so you won’t be missing anything else if you stop reading RIGHT NOW. Don’t say I didn’t warn you ...

I was very impressed with one post under one article on the subject: "...

I like to think that the microwave company’s lawyer stood up in court and said, “Mrs Peabody-Smith, what on earth possessed you to use a microwave for this purpose?

Past generation of this age group responded to the call to fight fascism, went across the ocean and died for freedom.

How could you have failed to foresee the consequences?

Present generation of the same age group screams "fascism" when deprived of bars and beaches for 2-3 weeks..."

Surely there must be dozens of other ways of solving the relatively simple problem of a wet pussy. With or without electronic devices.”

BTW, I'm 30 miles southeast from downtown Houston and 17 miles away from Galveston beaches, and in our mix of upper and middle middle-class space, oil and redneck suburbia 99% wear masks. Too bad I still need to return from work in VA:-) but they should let me back home anyway. I'll be happy to celebrate self-quarantine with my cats.

Still reading?

You're never bad, but you could be worse

I thought you might be. Shame on you etc. etc.

Jun 29

Back with an update

It's probably what my mum would have said about the coronavirus, and she'd have been right. Two of Spain's autonomous regions now face something much more fearful than a deadly virus and widespread economic turmoil. And what could be worse than a deadly virus and widespread economic turmoil?

Jun 24

A deadly virus, widespread economic turmoil and a regional parliament election campaign, that's what.

Just touching base post-quarantine, because the pandemic thang has moved on since then. Here the state of alarm ended some days ago, and we are now free to go wherever we want within the State, and by golly everyone's taking advantage too. As the El Rag headline says this morning, there are increasing fears of a resurge as everyone meets up again, particularly in relation to small children and teenagers. I reckon it's got to come, plus there are increasing indications from other countries.

Galicia and the Basque Country will be voting on 12 July, but first they have to endure the dreariness of the untimely and unwanted tub-thumping. True, there won't be so many open-air soapboxes, but that just means the media will be even more saturated with meaningless opportunistic blaargh spewed in the direction of a general public that just doesn't want to know, thanks. None of the handshaking, high-fiving and baby-kissing this time around, of course. Not so much touching base with the electorate as touching joints because high-fiving never really took off around these parts anyway, basketball players excepted, and so now it's more a case of winning smiles and low-elbowing amid empty promises, endless accusations and energetic denials.

On Saturday morning I was at first cheered and then depressed to finally hear those strangled 7 am post-party cries again - the recently released young things screeching and throwing up pavement pizzas as they emerged from the clubs round about. Mental note: avoid anyone under 30 at all costs for the next three months at least.

No prizes for zippy slogans, either!

But it's not just the young people. The only rule we have now is to wear a mask when social distancing (sorry, Tom) can't be guaranteed. It's only a matter of time, because people left to their own devices concentrate on just that, their own devices, and this is an area which reacted quite early on, so now I'm wondering about Wales (sorry, Chris S) and other places that had a late start.

I won't even bother to tell you which party says what, because basically they all sound the same. I've marked the one I personally feel earns five stars on the dismalometer, but you can make your own choice in your own little ProZ election:

I've been in groups these days where I was the only one wearing a mask, and I don't mean just our group - I mean most of the others around us. At the beginning of this thread I mentioned that I stood out because I was wearing one, and after months of everybody wearing one, I'm getting that feeling again. Does the mask actually help?

Euskadi Standing Firm (in Basque) / We'll get there!

With all the talk about faulty masks, I'm not sure, but it certainly makes me feel safer at the time, and that counts for something in my paranoid head.

(in Spanish). Well, I suppose that's what they mean, we'll get there, but the Spanish is actually ¡Saldremos!, "We'll leave". Right. "We'll leave and leave you to it", maybe.

A wee

It's time for new answers - ready to act (in Basque). They don't even bother with Spanish. Guess why?

Well, although not explicitly mentioned in the article below, it’s clear that going to the optician’s after a nice swim in the town pool the day before lockdown is why Ceredigion has done better than anywhere else in Britain.

Ready to govern (in Basque / We can govern (in Spanish). Right. Thanks for that. Send us a CV, but don't call us, we'll call you.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-53142088

Answers (in Basque) / Solutions (in Spanish). One word, short and sweet. But an answer isn't necessarily a solution, is it?

Edit: Not sure what I meant to type for the title of this post but there we go.

Hi, can you help me with my problem?

"Caravan and camping sites - all 800 of them - were also encouraged to close by the council"

- No, bugger off and go and bother someone else. - That's no solution!

Chris,

- No, but it's an answer, and that's what I promised you in Basque.

I don't know about the swimming pools, but it looks like those bogus caravan-dwelling Taffs you railed at a while ago might finally be run out of Wales!

A plan for the future (in Basque) / A plan for the future (in Spanish). Well, they obviously have some shit-hot Basque-Spanish translators on the job there, but definitely deservedly \*\*\*\*\* dismal.

I don't know if masks really help - maybe a little, but here we had a case where a man has supposedly infected two others while

Change the vote. Improve Euskadi (in Basque) / Let's cast a different vote. Let's come out of this better (in Spanish). Bit of an unwieldy mouthful in either language.

1. returning from Afghanistan on a plane (and they did not check him at the airport) and

And those are just the slogans.

2. crossing the whole country of Austria on a train while wearing a mask where he is said to have infected 2 other passengers, one of them which had been on the same plane.

Bring on the full-scale rhetoric ...

Note to safe: avoid party goers (but I am too old for this); avoid anyone with a backpack or a case. My father thinks that they just opened the borders to save the tourism industry but in France they expect the second wave back in August where they will be able to close the borders again when the summer time is other - but this is just the joke of a maybe uninformed person.

Post removed

In any case, work is back from abroad, within the country it is still very moody.

Jul 1

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary

I have a message telling me a post of mine has now been removed from this thread, from 12 May (!!) - it was the one about the phone call from Trump - because it was at odds with Site Rule 1. Well, I've taken a look at Site Rule 1, and it looks like they'll have to remove most of my posts on there. So good luck to whoever has to sift through the rest of them. Might have been an idea to do it back in May?

page29.html

Local time: 21:18

Local time: 15:18

I cannot believe this...

Lucky you...

Is there any subject more "controversial in nature" than coronavirus itself?

Jun 27

Are we not allowed to speak about what scares and worries us in our personal and professional lives?

Here in Texas, a predictable, devastating disaster is unfolding. In fact, it was already predicted by all the experts, but the governor didn't take any notice.

You are right, the staff will have to remove all these posts. The team needs to start to remove awkward translation suggestions (or mistranslations) provided by certain translators in Kudoz Terminology. This would be in line with rule number 1.

After several weeks of gradual relaxation of the lockdown, cases in Texas are now doubling week-on-week.

@expressisverbis

In Houston, which boasts the world's largest medical center (actually dozens of different hospitals and clinics), ICU bed occupancy is already more than 100% and surge capacity is being exhausted rapidly.

No, they don't mean that there should be no discussion of coronavirus. They mean "stay on topic and don't stray into politics, religion etc.", which is the gist of Rule 1.

ICU beds are filling up fast here in Austin, too (the 11th largest city in the United States), a situation that's also being repeated in the larger San Antonio and Dallas metropolitan areas.

Actually, I hadn't noticed that the message says I can edit the post, and then submit it for approval. But I don't think there's much point editing a post that's 7 weeks old, do you?

The reasons are very simple: Too many people refusing to wear masks (and the refusal of the state governor, Greg Abbott, to impose a mask requirement) and practice social distancing. That's the real reason, not the "increased testing" lies being purveyed by Trump, Pence, and the other Republican killer sheep (seriously: They really do believe that if you test less, there will be fewer infections).

Zero patients or just people

As the saying goes, "If you don't like the mask, you're gonna really hate the ventilator."

While I understand the ProZ neutrality approach, staying aside with something really bad happening in from of you—or hushing out the conscious ones—is far from “noli nocere”.

The United States now has more confirmed cases and more hospitalizations than it did during the height of the crisis in New York and New Jersey. Even though Our Dear Leader is telling everybody that the virus is "dying down".

Besides, translation is not an abstract spherical horse in vacuum but rather Linguistics, Literature, Economics, Biology, History, Math, Physics, Politics, and just everything people can see, feel, think, or speak!

But there is still some humour to be had in the crisis:

It's the blood of understanding, but who meant it. Or we should use teeny uptalking as if asking timidly, perhaps?

https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2020/06/24/mask-mandate-florida-anger-erupts-coronavirus-vpx.cnn

Private schools, private politics, private armies, private hospitals, private churches, private R&D, private prisons, private diseases, private cures, and now private police, but WHO cares...

We should look on the bright side. Covid-19 has clearly given some people with severe personality disorders a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have their 15 seconds of fame.

So, how would you translate such a question: “If a pest is some 2 nanometers (0.000002 millimetres) and an average (not to mention self-made) mask holes are about 0.6 millimetres, then what is the use for healthy\* people of wearing such masks, let alone without protecting the eyes?”

Local time: 22:18

Nevermind that at least in UA they just increased daily tests from ~700 to ~5000 (with 10,000+ in mind) predicting a 'new wave', nor that mask and sanitizer factories are flourishing so much: Somebody is always fiddling gaily while Rome something is burning brightly.

The little-known 28th Amendment to the Constitooshun

Yes, I know,

Jun 28

but religion, beliefs, politics, etc. can become inevitable when we are talking about this pandemic. I think Proz teams need to look into other real issues. Honestly, I don't remember the phone call from Trump of your removed post... if your post was about the phone call, on 1st May, between Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and Donald Trump, who praised Portugal's performance and offered all the help in combating coronavirus, I believe it wouldn't be a problem at all. By the way... lately, Portugal is showing a high number of infected people compared to Spain or even to France. The number of deaths is decreasing, but now the South is in a painful situation. You have that right, so you can edit it, if you like, but be gentle with the site rules

"No United States citizen shall be forced to wear a mask." Before you look it up, ask yourself this question - have I ever lied to you?

One of mine has gone too. I can’t edit it because I can’t now see what it said🙄

They've kinda kept it under wraps until now, obviously. POTUS wrote it in at the bottom a few weeks ago with a felt tip when nobody was looking, apparently.

The Orange One has influence everywhere. We’re lucky he didn’t fire off a tweet or two about those very, very bad people on ProZ and shut the place down.

Less dramatic and definitely less brazen is the situation of Spain, but here too delockdown, deconfinement, new normality or whatever you choose to call it is tiptoeing into resurges all over the State. Now, I'm not the kind of guy who says "I told you so", but, you know, I did tell you so. Please bear with me, because I'm actually gearing up to become one of those presidents of associations holding forth from home in front of their bookcases to the masses looking for scapegoats and blaarghing day and night. Associations, federations, councils, organisations - how many do you need or want?

Edit: I’ve now found the first line of the offending post, which does refer to “cockwombles like Putin and Trump”, so I guess I’ve been spreading fake news again. Oops.

Night after night they're there on the box, so I reckon that if that shouty lady in red in Robin's video gets air time, I can as well.

Jul 2

Bitter cries on Spain's chat shows, too. You may remember my "Nobodies/Somebodies/Anybodies" post here (Page 7, post 7). The People's Princess, She Who Knows and Speaks Her Truth in Capital Letters, has finally broken her silence to lambast the powers-that-be for their catastrophic management of the crisis. Not that she'd been deliberately silent on the matter - word has it she'd actually been concentrating on lying around in the sun on the verandah to merge in bikini marks, and having a bit of work done to trim up those shave lines - but it always sounds better if you break your silence.

That's bad news about Portugal, expressisverbis, but you wouldn't have thought so from the heartwarming speeches by both heads of state and PMs on the newly opened border with Spain yesterday, which you probably saw or read about.

She used that sinister collagen-induced pout of quiet, informed confidence to tell the masses that she Personally Knows people who have Used the Madrid Metro. She Personally Knows people who have been In Hospital and Are Ill. Shame On You, Government, Shame On You. Not Her, you understand, because the People's Princess obviously never travels by metro. These are People She Knows - butcher, baker, candlestickmaker etc.

The King expressed his "joy" that Spaniards could now cross over into Elvas again. Most of the people on both sides seemed happy about it too, except one woman in a car (Portuguese side, I think) who said quite categorically they should have waited a bit longer.

Last week's gig was unheard of. On this occasion, even the main scandalmonger and high priest of the whole shebang could not take her shrill verbal diarrhoea (and believe me, he sees it being shovelled around by the shedload constantly) and actually walked off his own show, refusing to remain on the same set with the People's Princess.

Felipe VI's on a tour of his realm at the moment to raise spirits and lend support to that "new normality". The previous call was a little farther south in the province of Sevilla, in Spain's poorest town, where he and the queen did a social-distanced walkabout with no face masks. People seemed glad to see them, although there were cries of "more work, less charity", and not a little muttering about the hasty clean-up operation days in advance to render the gaff, if not regal, at least a little less unsightly. One does what one can.

They seem to have resolved their differences - (?) it could be that it was recorded prior to the debacle - but the country was relieved/aghast/agog/only vaguely surprised/not surprised at all/exasperated to see the pair of them again on one of those celebrity cook-in programmes later in the week. They both have a busy schedule amid the Corona Chaos, and evidently you can't stay angry for long with people you are utterly, totally and completely dependent on to crush pepper corns and grate cheese for your spagbol against a 60-minute countdown with professional chefs barking at you all the while.

It suddenly strikes me that all this might be construed as political. Still, I haven't used the word cockwomble. Oh, blast ...

Local time: 16:18

... Jul 2

Not surprising in the US

I’ve now found the first line of the offending post, which does refer to “cockwombles like Putin and Trump” ...

Here in Texas, a predictable, devastating disaster is unfolding. In fact, it was already predicted by all the experts, but the governor didn't take any notice. [snip]

Maybe a cockwomble felt offended by the comparison.

We should look on the bright side.

Mervyn, Jul 2

Covid-19 has clearly given some people with severe personality disorders a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have their 15 seconds of fame.

Here's an update on Portugal, in the end of June: https://www.theportugalnews.com/news/covid-19-portugal-update-30-june/54681 Yes, I read about it. Yesterday, Spain and Portugal opened their borders, but I am worried about something else. I am not reading the news so often like before, because work has kept me busy lately (thank God!). I am confident we will take precautions to not face a second (or more serious) wave.

The United States is one of the few countries where climate change denial is a major plank of one of the major political parties, so it is not surprising that in a country where public health officials receive death threats for what in other places would be accepted as factual statements about COVID-19, it is not surprising that the pandemic has not subsided.

Andrea Riffo

One a bright note, there haven't been any school shootings since the onset of the pandemic.

Chile

You can't fix stupid

Day 107-ish of quarantine

What politics has to do with anything?

Jul 4

Except, of course, that it's all Russia's fault:-)

Santiago, Chile

I was very impressed with one post under one article on the subject: "...

- I now own three pairs of slippers.

Past generation of this age group responded to the call to fight fascism, went across the ocean and died for freedom.

- Not a single pair of jeans fit anymore.

Present generation of the same age group screams "fascism" when deprived of bars and beaches for 2-3 weeks..."

- The step bench and dumbbells I purchased sometime around day 20 keep glaring at me from the corner.

BTW, I'm 30 miles southeast from downtown Houston and 17 miles away from Galveston beaches, and in our mix of upper and middle middle-class space, oil and redneck suburbia 99% wear masks. Too bad I still need to return from work in VA:-) but they should let me back home anyway. I'll be happy to celebrate self-quarantine with my cats.

- Day pijamas are all the new rage.

You're never bad, but you could be worse

- Bra?

Jun 29

On a more serious note, the infection rate in Chile seems to be (finally!) slowing down a bit at "only" 3,550 new cases yesterday. Yes, that is a good number, we are quite -ed.

It's probably what my mum would have said about the coronavirus, and she'd have been right. Two of Spain's autonomous regions now face something much more fearful than a deadly virus and widespread economic turmoil. And what could be worse than a deadly virus and widespread economic turmoil?

The end of quarantine is nowhere in sight. It's going to be a looong Winter.

A deadly virus, widespread economic turmoil and a regional parliament election campaign, that's what.

Local time: 17:10

Galicia and the Basque Country will be voting on 12 July, but first they have to endure the dreariness of the untimely and unwanted tub-thumping. True, there won't be so many open-air soapboxes, but that just means the media will be even more saturated with meaningless opportunistic blaargh spewed in the direction of a general public that just doesn't want to know, thanks. None of the handshaking, high-fiving and baby-kissing this time around, of course. Not so much touching base with the electorate as touching joints because high-fiving never really took off around these parts anyway, basketball players excepted, and so now it's more a case of winning smiles and low-elbowing amid empty promises, endless accusations and energetic denials.

@Andrea

No prizes for zippy slogans, either!

Jul 5

I won't even bother to tell you which party says what, because basically they all sound the same. I've marked the one I personally feel earns five stars on the dismalometer, but you can make your own choice in your own little ProZ election:

Hi Andrea, it's been a long time. Sorry to hear about that, but:

Euskadi Standing Firm (in Basque) / We'll get there!

Making a determined start on point 3 will definitely improve point 2. Plus, with three pairs of slippers, no risk of them wearing out with all that stepping.

(in Spanish). Well, I suppose that's what they mean, we'll get there, but the Spanish is actually ¡Saldremos!, "We'll leave". Right. "We'll leave and leave you to it", maybe.

Or sell/exchange two pairs and get a couple of pairs of elastic-waisted trousers until point 3 has sorted that one out. I don't know what day pyjamas are. Last point - can't help you there. I ditched all mine years ago when people began to talk.

It's time for new answers - ready to act (in Basque). They don't even bother with Spanish. Guess why?

Meanwhile, I had another post ditched. Simply removed this time, from 27 March on page 11 (the first one they asked me to edit, now removed) was from 12 May, so they're working backwards.

Ready to govern (in Basque / We can govern (in Spanish). Right. Thanks for that. Send us a CV, but don't call us, we'll call you.

That catch-all Rule 1 again. I can't remember what the 27 March post was about, but I'm sure it was cruel / subversive / naughty / distasteful. I suppose the "Cookery Day" posts are next for the chop (pun intended).

Answers (in Basque) / Solutions (in Spanish). One word, short and sweet. But an answer isn't necessarily a solution, is it?

Beatriz Ramírez de Haro

Hi, can you help me with my problem?

Save the tortilla

- No, bugger off and go and bother someone else. - That's no solution!

Hi Mervyn,

- No, but it's an answer, and that's what I promised you in Basque.

Hopefully your tortilla de patatas will survive the censorship (with onion and without chorizo).

A plan for the future (in Basque) / A plan for the future (in Spanish). Well, they obviously have some shit-hot Basque-Spanish translators on the job there, but definitely deservedly \*\*\*\*\* dismal.

@Beatriz

Change the vote. Improve Euskadi (in Basque) / Let's cast a different vote. Let's come out of this better (in Spanish). Bit of an unwieldy mouthful in either language.

Jul 6

And those are just the slogans.

Thanks, Beatriz.

Bring on the full-scale rhetoric ...

Only one among a million recipes you can find out there if you Google it, but it's the only recipe tolerated at this house.

Post removed

On the removal of my posts, it occurred to me that I originally posted this as Off-Topic, but it was the site that moved it to the Covid-19 outbreak forum after a while.

Jul 1

Which means the problem is not so much straying off the topic, because you can't stray off Off-Topic, as the forays into politics, religion, distastefulness, offensiveness.

I have a message telling me a post of mine has now been removed from this thread, from 12 May (!!) - it was the one about the phone call from Trump - because it was at odds with Site Rule 1. Well, I've taken a look at Site Rule 1, and it looks like they'll have to remove most of my posts on there. So good luck to whoever has to sift through the rest of them. Might have been an idea to do it back in May?

But not just by me. In that kind of situation everyone pitches in too. So ProZ should really remove the entire thread. I wonder if they're up for that one.

Local time: 21:18

Second round

I cannot believe this...

Galicia is now putting 70,000 people at 14 locations into quarantine again (70,000!!).

Is there any subject more "controversial in nature" than coronavirus itself?

Just up the coast here in Ordizia, hundreds more who may have been in several bars on the same street since 27 June are now being asked to ring up the Osakidetza health service to make an appointment for a Covid test. Administrative staff, doctors, nurses and orderlies won't be kicking their heels about that one, considering the big mess they were supposed to be ratcheting down by now, but it could well get worse, because they also closed eight beaches here at the weekend when it became impossible to guarantee a distance of half a metre, let alone one metre or more.

Are we not allowed to speak about what scares and worries us in our personal and professional lives?

And so it goes.

You are right, the staff will have to remove all these posts. The team needs to start to remove awkward translation suggestions (or mistranslations) provided by certain translators in Kudoz Terminology. This would be in line with rule number 1.

No bull

@expressisverbis

Jul 7

No, they don't mean that there should be no discussion of coronavirus. They mean "stay on topic and don't stray into politics, religion etc.", which is the gist of Rule 1.

It's San Fermín today, signalling the start of Hemingway's favourite weeklong fiesta, but no bulls charging around the streets amid a sea of red neckscarves and white shirts in Iruña (Pamplona) at 8 am this morning.

Actually, I hadn't noticed that the message says I can edit the post, and then submit it for approval. But I don't think there's much point editing a post that's 7 weeks old, do you?

Or at 8 am any day this week, because the virus put paid to all that.

Zero patients or just people

So this morning I didn't bother turning on the TV to watch the usual two or three minutes of live chaos.

While I understand the ProZ neutrality approach, staying aside with something really bad happening in from of you—or hushing out the conscious ones—is far from “noli nocere”.

Apparently this week they're concentrating on "Best of San Fermín" from previous years.

Besides, translation is not an abstract spherical horse in vacuum but rather Linguistics, Literature, Economics, Biology, History, Math, Physics, Politics, and just everything people can see, feel, think, or speak!

From what I can see, still quite a lot of people have descended on Iruña, but nothing compared to the usual.

It's the blood of understanding, but who meant it. Or we should use teeny uptalking as if asking timidly, perhaps?

At least the bulls can grab a bit of peace and quiet in the mornings.

Private schools, private politics, private armies, private hospitals, private churches, private R&D, private prisons, private diseases, private cures, and now private police, but WHO cares...

With the further advantage of not being killed later on in the day.

So, how would you translate such a question: “If a pest is some 2 nanometers (0.000002 millimetres) and an average (not to mention self-made) mask holes are about 0.6 millimetres, then what is the use for healthy\* people of wearing such masks, let alone without protecting the eyes?”

As anyone who's been at the San Fermines amid the heaving throngs throwing beer and wine all over each other can tell you, it's murder in the afternoons.

Nevermind that at least in UA they just increased daily tests from ~700 to ~5000 (with 10,000+ in mind) predicting a 'new wave', nor that mask and sanitizer factories are flourishing so much: Somebody is always fiddling gaily while Rome something is burning brightly.

Local time: 16:10

Yes, I know,

It's cruel

but religion, beliefs, politics, etc. can become inevitable when we are talking about this pandemic. I think Proz teams need to look into other real issues. Honestly, I don't remember the phone call from Trump of your removed post... if your post was about the phone call, on 1st May, between Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and Donald Trump, who praised Portugal's performance and offered all the help in combating coronavirus, I believe it wouldn't be a problem at all. By the way... lately, Portugal is showing a high number of infected people compared to Spain or even to France. The number of deaths is decreasing, but now the South is in a painful situation. You have that right, so you can edit it, if you like, but be gentle with the site rules

Apparently this week they're concentrating on "Best of San Fermín" from previous years. From what I can see, still quite a lot of people have descended on Iruña, but nothing compared to the usual.

One of mine has gone too. I can’t edit it because I can’t now see what it said🙄

At least the bulls can grab a bit of peace and quiet in the mornings. With the further advantage of not being killed later on in the day.

The Orange One has influence everywhere. We’re lucky he didn’t fire off a tweet or two about those very, very bad people on ProZ and shut the place down.

I am against any act of cruelty committed against an animal.

Edit: I’ve now found the first line of the offending post, which does refer to “cockwombles like Putin and Trump”, so I guess I’ve been spreading fake news again. Oops.

Never liked these "shows" in Spain or in Portugal.

Jul 2

Thank God, where I live, we do not promote this kind of events.

That's bad news about Portugal, expressisverbis, but you wouldn't have thought so from the heartwarming speeches by both heads of state and PMs on the newly opened border with Spain yesterday, which you probably saw or read about.

You are right, at least the bulls will have some peace.

The King expressed his "joy" that Spaniards could now cross over into Elvas again. Most of the people on both sides seemed happy about it too, except one woman in a car (Portuguese side, I think) who said quite categorically they should have waited a bit longer.

Local time: 11:10

Felipe VI's on a tour of his realm at the moment to raise spirits and lend support to that "new normality". The previous call was a little farther south in the province of Sevilla, in Spain's poorest town, where he and the queen did a social-distanced walkabout with no face masks. People seemed glad to see them, although there were cries of "more work, less charity", and not a little muttering about the hasty clean-up operation days in advance to render the gaff, if not regal, at least a little less unsightly. One does what one can.

Still quarantined

It suddenly strikes me that all this might be construed as political. Still, I haven't used the word cockwomble. Oh, blast ...

Hi, Mervyn!

... Jul 2

Last point - can't help you there.

I’ve now found the first line of the offending post, which does refer to “cockwombles like Putin and Trump” ...

I ditched all mine years ago when people began to talk.

Maybe a cockwomble felt offended by the comparison.

Damn those nosy neighbours!

Mervyn, Jul 2

And quarantine in Santiago has been extended for yet another week.

Here's an update on Portugal, in the end of June: https://www.theportugalnews.com/news/covid-19-portugal-update-30-june/54681 Yes, I read about it. Yesterday, Spain and Portugal opened their borders, but I am worried about something else. I am not reading the news so often like before, because work has kept me busy lately (thank God!). I am confident we will take precautions to not face a second (or more serious) wave.

At this rate, we'll be in lockdown all through August.

Andrea Riffo

I think by now we have the dubious honour of being the city that's had the longest quarantine in the world?

Chile

Not 100% sure about that, but close enough. Argh.

Day 107-ish of quarantine

Meanwhile, back at the ranch ...

Jul 4

Jul 8

Santiago, Chile

Literally.

- I now own three pairs of slippers.

Talking of bulls, spare a thought for Paloma Cuevas these days, bullfighter's daughter and bullfighter's wife, and who knows if a bullfighter's mother some day.

- Not a single pair of jeans fit anymore.

She only has daughters, so rather unlikely, but it wouldn't be a first.

- The step bench and dumbbells I purchased sometime around day 20 keep glaring at me from the corner.

Although she recently became a bullfighter's ex-wife, or is separated, rather, and hence her deep and unconsolable sorrow.

- Day pijamas are all the new rage.

Hubby Enrique Ponce (... no, it's two syllables, not one) is now with another comely lady of a previous vintage, although I'm not sure if that's the reason for the split or the result. Oh, those bullfighters!

- Bra?

I bought the glossy ¡Hola!

On a more serious note, the infection rate in Chile seems to be (finally!) slowing down a bit at "only" 3,550 new cases yesterday. Yes, that is a good number, we are quite -ed.

this morning, and there's Paloma on the cover, selling her story, or rather baring her soul, coming clean about the Difficult Times ahead. I learn that her priorities are her daughters and looking after her parents, at her huge country estate down south in Jaén.

The end of quarantine is nowhere in sight. It's going to be a looong Winter.

Oh, those bullfighters' wives!

Local time: 17:10

The Mask of Sorrow

@Andrea

Jul 16

Jul 5

I'm back. But that's because the mask is too. It started off with a few isolated confinements, then progressed to police keeping watch outside entire housing blocks full of lockdownees, then some towns were locked down as well, then one of Spain's autonomous regions,

Hi Andrea, it's been a long time. Sorry to hear about that, but:

Catalonia in particular, then two or three more, and as of last night the hateful - and dubious - mask is mandatory all over the state at all times outside your own residence, whereas previously you only had to use one if you were going to a shop or some other building, not just walking down the street.

Making a determined start on point 3 will definitely improve point 2. Plus, with three pairs of slippers, no risk of them wearing out with all that stepping.

This morning I remembered just as I was going out for the paper, because it's been so long now.

Or sell/exchange two pairs and get a couple of pairs of elastic-waisted trousers until point 3 has sorted that one out. I don't know what day pyjamas are. Last point - can't help you there. I ditched all mine years ago when people began to talk.

As foreigners pour into the country again to save the tourist industry, we can expect more of that.

Meanwhile, I had another post ditched. Simply removed this time, from 27 March on page 11 (the first one they asked me to edit, now removed) was from 12 May, so they're working backwards.

A crowd of lads and laddettes from a certain country with a certain reputation for riotous assemblies abroad were doing their best in that regard in Magaluf, Majorca, the other day, dancing on car roofs during an improvised drunken street party.

That catch-all Rule 1 again. I can't remember what the 27 March post was about, but I'm sure it was cruel / subversive / naughty / distasteful. I suppose the "Cookery Day" posts are next for the chop (pun intended).

It's either safety or save the tourist industry, because it's difficult to have your tortilla and eat it too, but guess which one wins.

Beatriz Ramírez de Haro

And a big emphasis on saving hostelry in general. Bilbao's watering holes, for example, faced with the prospect of a reduction in their capacity what with mandatory social distancing, came up with a light-bulb solution: simply extend the pavement terrace into the street past the kerb, taking up three or four car parking spaces in the process.

Save the tortilla

There may have been fewer cars around the city recently, but Bilbao has had a congestion problem for years, so now it's back to square one with these spaces being taken up all over the place.

Hi Mervyn,

Doubtless the watering holes will claim that this is an environmental initiative, because fewer cars being able to park means less pollution. Sorted!

Hopefully your tortilla de patatas will survive the censorship (with onion and without chorizo).

Victory and shame

@Beatriz

In a game against Sporting, in the Dragão Stadium. FC Porto is now National Champion 2019/20.

Jul 6

Yesterday, supporters took to the streets to celebrate amid the coronavirus pandemic, and it was a chaos.

Thanks, Beatriz.

TV showed images of hundreds of people gathering on the streets of Porto, without much social distance being observed.

Only one among a million recipes you can find out there if you Google it, but it's the only recipe tolerated at this house.

A cop was injured, many bottles and other objects blew away, and some of them thrown to the police when they tried to keep order in one of the most famous avenues of the city.

On the removal of my posts, it occurred to me that I originally posted this as Off-Topic, but it was the site that moved it to the Covid-19 outbreak forum after a while.

The same happened in Valongo (where I live) and I could hear something "strangely" rude, with chanting and horns combined, followed by the word "Porto" shouted by Valongo's supporters, that I have never heard it before from Porto fans when I used to live in downtown.

Which means the problem is not so much straying off the topic, because you can't stray off Off-Topic, as the forays into politics, religion, distastefulness, offensiveness.

Fans ignored masks, social distance and disrespected the police, and also themselves, despite DGS (Directorate-General of Health) recommendations and warnings.

But not just by me. In that kind of situation everyone pitches in too. So ProZ should really remove the entire thread. I wonder if they're up for that one.

I am ashamed once more… if we do not comply with the “normality” times, we will suffer more in long term.

Second round

Congratulations, Porto!

Galicia is now putting 70,000 people at 14 locations into quarantine again (70,000!!).

Some of your supporters are really "morcões".

Just up the coast here in Ordizia, hundreds more who may have been in several bars on the same street since 27 June are now being asked to ring up the Osakidetza health service to make an appointment for a Covid test. Administrative staff, doctors, nurses and orderlies won't be kicking their heels about that one, considering the big mess they were supposed to be ratcheting down by now, but it could well get worse, because they also closed eight beaches here at the weekend when it became impossible to guarantee a distance of half a metre, let alone one metre or more.

(Note: I am a fan of FCP, but I am not fanatical or senseless.)

And so it goes.

Casting terror into the hearts

No bull

Jul 18

Jul 7

People have been living in this soup of microlife for ages, since the very beginning.

It's San Fermín today, signalling the start of Hemingway's favourite weeklong fiesta, but no bulls charging around the streets amid a sea of red neckscarves and white shirts in Iruña (Pamplona) at 8 am this morning.

The modern “normality” is very overtoned: If, parroting the WHO, a student or an adult would say to a medic or an instructor that

Or at 8 am any day this week, because the virus put paid to all that.

(1) even the healthy must wear masks,

So this morning I didn't bother turning on the TV to watch the usual two or three minutes of live chaos.

(2) stay at home,

Apparently this week they're concentrating on "Best of San Fermín" from previous years.

(3) keep way from others, and

From what I can see, still quite a lot of people have descended on Iruña, but nothing compared to the usual.

(4) wash off local immunity may prevent a virus from penetrating the body, he or she would be considered a jester, instantly get an “F”—or be kindly sent to a nearest psychiatrist.

At least the bulls can grab a bit of peace and quiet in the mornings.

The point is after a couple of (let alone over six) months without mental and physical activity under stress, even a healthy but isolated man turns physicaly, psychologicaly, and financially totally handicapped.

With the further advantage of not being killed later on in the day.

And how about families and countries?

As anyone who's been at the San Fermines amid the heaving throngs throwing beer and wine all over each other can tell you, it's murder in the afternoons.

Not merely mask-shaming.

Local time: 16:10

Meanwhile,

It's cruel

Coronavirus has already slashed life expectancy by TWO YEARS [and counting] -DailyMail As well as according to OpenSecrets even masked BLM 'moderate' pacifists are sponsoring the political parties, as well this ‘pandemic’ is obviously not purely a medical condition, but rather a political one.

Apparently this week they're concentrating on "Best of San Fermín" from previous years. From what I can see, still quite a lot of people have descended on Iruña, but nothing compared to the usual.

No darkside, just balancing the view, yet this is interesting times... sometime.

At least the bulls can grab a bit of peace and quiet in the mornings. With the further advantage of not being killed later on in the day.

More shame to add

I am against any act of cruelty committed against an animal.

When faced by this Covid-19 threat, I imagined the best case scenario, I thought people would start to change for the better, but I was wrong.

Never liked these "shows" in Spain or in Portugal.

I took this photo last year:

Thank God, where I live, we do not promote this kind of events.

Valongo Mountains

You are right, at least the bulls will have some peace.

And at this moment, nearby it looks like this:

Local time: 11:10

BB16UmIB

Still quarantined

Portugal is experiencing the hottest temperatures this week, with more than 40 degrees Celsius and it will continue.

Hi, Mervyn!

The country has occurrences of forest fires difficult to deal with and that can become catastrophic.

Last point - can't help you there.

A fireman died, and many of them are seriously injured.

I ditched all mine years ago when people began to talk.

Right now, I can see yellow choppers fighting fire from the air. Unfortunately, we see this brutality happening all over the world every year.

Damn those nosy neighbours!

People do not change...

And quarantine in Santiago has been extended for yet another week.

Hard times Jul 23

At this rate, we'll be in lockdown all through August.

expressisverbis,

I think by now we have the dubious honour of being the city that's had the longest quarantine in the world?

Sorry to hear that!

Not 100% sure about that, but close enough. Argh.

I really hope and pray that the weather changes soon and brings you rains and morning coolness.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch ...

Coronavirus continues spreading in Ukraine, with more than 60 thousand cases overall and more than 26 thousand people being currently ill.

Jul 8

My mother in Kyiv was very sick last week, with 40 Grad fever which continued for 3 days.

Literally.

The daughter of my best friend in Kyiv was also ill with the same symptoms.

Talking of bulls, spare a thought for Paloma Cuevas these days, bullfighter's daughter and bullfighter's wife, and who knows if a bullfighter's mother some day.

Thank God they both recovered, but I pray for people in Ukraine and throughout the world to stay healthy and to overcome this epidemy soon.

She only has daughters, so rather unlikely, but it wouldn't be a first.

Oksana,

Although she recently became a bullfighter's ex-wife, or is separated, rather, and hence her deep and unconsolable sorrow.

Jul 23

Hubby Enrique Ponce (... no, it's two syllables, not one) is now with another comely lady of a previous vintage, although I'm not sure if that's the reason for the split or the result. Oh, those bullfighters!

Oksana Weiss wrote:

I bought the glossy ¡Hola!

Meanwhile, Coronavirus continues spreading in Ukraine, with more than 60 thousand cases overall and more than 26 thousand people being currently ill.

this morning, and there's Paloma on the cover, selling her story, or rather baring her soul, coming clean about the Difficult Times ahead. I learn that her priorities are her daughters and looking after her parents, at her huge country estate down south in Jaén.

Thank God your mother and the daughter of your friend have recovered!

Oh, those bullfighters' wives!

Every time someone tells me a relative or friend has recovered, I feel very happy!

The Mask of Sorrow

My young sister was infected too, but right now she is fine and went back to work at the hospital.

Jul 16

In Portugal the number of infected people is slightly higher at the moment.

I'm back. But that's because the mask is too. It started off with a few isolated confinements, then progressed to police keeping watch outside entire housing blocks full of lockdownees, then some towns were locked down as well, then one of Spain's autonomous regions,

Deaths aren't increasing, but cases of this infection appear every day.

Catalonia in particular, then two or three more, and as of last night the hateful - and dubious - mask is mandatory all over the state at all times outside your own residence, whereas previously you only had to use one if you were going to a shop or some other building, not just walking down the street.

The weather remains hot, and fires still coming.

This morning I remembered just as I was going out for the paper, because it's been so long now.

We will overcome this "beast" soon, together!

As foreigners pour into the country again to save the tourist industry, we can expect more of that.

We just need to keep the faith, be strong, and be very careful!

A crowd of lads and laddettes from a certain country with a certain reputation for riotous assemblies abroad were doing their best in that regard in Magaluf, Majorca, the other day, dancing on car roofs during an improvised drunken street party.

Stay safe!

It's either safety or save the tourist industry, because it's difficult to have your tortilla and eat it too, but guess which one wins.

Warm regards, and my virtual hug!

And a big emphasis on saving hostelry in general. Bilbao's watering holes, for example, faced with the prospect of a reduction in their capacity what with mandatory social distancing, came up with a light-bulb solution: simply extend the pavement terrace into the street past the kerb, taking up three or four car parking spaces in the process.

"Together"

There may have been fewer cars around the city recently, but Bilbao has had a congestion problem for years, so now it's back to square one with these spaces being taken up all over the place.

Jul 30

Doubtless the watering holes will claim that this is an environmental initiative, because fewer cars being able to park means less pollution. Sorted!

No offence meant, Oksana and expressisverbis, but to elaborate on another moment during this thread, I think all that initial togetherness and solidarity went down the toilet a long time ago.

Victory and shame

At local level, regional level, national level, EU level and international level, I don't think the bickering and accusations could be worse, plus you hear about them together all the time through the media, always glad to showcase the horror of it all.

In a game against Sporting, in the Dragão Stadium. FC Porto is now National Champion 2019/20.

Here my lower-level basis is Spain, but it could apply to most countries these days:

Yesterday, supporters took to the streets to celebrate amid the coronavirus pandemic, and it was a chaos.

Here the Town Hall presents something, the opposition says bollocks, the Basque Government makes a statement, and the opposition says bollocks, Sánchez says something, and the opposition says bollocks, Spain and the rest say something, and Rutte and Co. say bollocks, China says something, and the US says bollocks.

TV showed images of hundreds of people gathering on the streets of Porto, without much social distance being observed.

That's our glorified representatives talking.

A cop was injured, many bottles and other objects blew away, and some of them thrown to the police when they tried to keep order in one of the most famous avenues of the city.

Nobody is going to help.

The same happened in Valongo (where I live) and I could hear something "strangely" rude, with chanting and horns combined, followed by the word "Porto" shouted by Valongo's supporters, that I have never heard it before from Porto fans when I used to live in downtown.

You take it down to street level, and people are ready to turn to crime after over 12 years of belt-tightening in all the wrong places.

Fans ignored masks, social distance and disrespected the police, and also themselves, despite DGS (Directorate-General of Health) recommendations and warnings.

page-31

I am ashamed once more… if we do not comply with the “normality” times, we will suffer more in long term.

Portugalsko

Congratulations, Porto!

Local time: 12:08

Some of your supporters are really "morcões".

(2015)

(Note: I am a fan of FCP, but I am not fanatical or senseless.)

Casting terror into the hearts

Aug 3

Jul 18

No offence meant, Oksana and expressisverbis, but to elaborate on another moment during this thread, I think all that initial togetherness and solidarity went down the toilet a long time ago.

At local level, regional level, national level, EU level and international level, I don't think the bickering and accusations could be worse, plus you hear about them together all the time through the media, always glad to showcase the horror of it all.

Here my lower-level basis is Spain, but it could apply to most countries these days:

People have been living in this soup of microlife for ages, since the very beginning.

Here the Town Hall presents something, the opposition says bollocks, the Basque Government makes a statement, and the opposition says bollocks, Sánchez says something, and the opposition says bollocks, Spain and the rest say something, and Rutte and Co. say bollocks, China says something, and the US says bollocks.

That's our glorified representatives talking.

Nobody is going to help.

You take it down to street level, and people are ready to turn to crime after over 12 years of belt-tightening in all the wrong places.

The modern “normality” is very overtoned:

If, parroting the WHO, a student or an adult would say to a medic or an instructor that

No, I don't feel personally ofended.

(1) even the healthy must wear masks,

You're right, everyone talks nonsense, and we need to see a light in this very gloomy situation, and yet we can't see it.

The world seems to be upside down, but I need to be optimistic and sympathise with the human being.

This is what keeps my mind sane beyond other things.

We need hope:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qZVb2xG8nI Don't lose it!

(2) stay at home,

Španělsko

(3) keep way from others, and

Local time: 13:08

(4) wash off local immunity may prevent a virus from penetrating the body, he or she would be considered a jester, instantly get an “F”—or be kindly sent to a nearest psychiatrist.

The point is after a couple of (let alone over six) months without mental and physical activity under stress, even a healthy but isolated man turns physicaly, psychologicaly, and financially totally handicapped.

And how about families and countries?

Not merely mask-shaming.

Everyone expects the Spanish Imposition

Meanwhile,

Sep 4

Coronavirus has already slashed life expectancy by TWO YEARS [and counting] -DailyMail

As well as according to OpenSecrets even masked BLM 'moderate' pacifists are sponsoring the political parties, as well this ‘pandemic’ is obviously not purely a medical condition, but rather a political one.

Yes, we had the pre-lockdown, the lockdown, the post-lockdown, and now the could-be-very-likely-lockdown again because during the post-lockdown we behaved exactly as we did during the pre-lockdown, except with much more pent-up enthusiasm due to the months of lockdown.

No darkside, just balancing the view, yet this is interesting times... sometime.

What can I say?

More shame to add

We had our chance and we blew it.

Spain’s a no-no for travel, trade and travails because we failed to make use of our common sense, which would appear to be the least common of the senses.

Too depressing to write about now, so more about that later.

Meanwhile, on the generally lighter note I generally strive to hit in the general interest, introducing the:

When faced by this Covid-19 threat, I imagined the best case scenario, I thought people would start to change for the better, but I was wrong.

Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle

I took this photo last year:

I couldn’t think of anything else suitable beginning with P to draw out the alliteration, an operation I admit was totally unnecessary.

Feel free to write in with any additional Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle Post “P” Proposals, but I warn you you’ll be wasting your time because neither I nor anyone else will take any notice.

Valongo Mountains

Now where was I?

And at this moment, nearby it looks like this:

Oh yes, the Puzzle. To cut a long story short (me!!

BB16UmIB

I know, I can hear you laughing), I’ve been on holiday in two provincial capitals here in the Spanish State, which I’ll slyly and enigmatically refer to as PC1 and PC2, and your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to guess which two Spanish cities I’m talking about.

Spaniards, Johnny Foreigners living over here and Hispanophiles should be able to identify them without much trouble, especially since I’ve included at least one decisive pointer for each.

Today we’ll kick off with PC1. And please read the competition rules.

If you prefer, you can skip the first instalment of PC1 inbetween, and go straight to the competition rules, but there wouldn’t be much point in doing that, would there, because then you wouldn’t be able to enter the competition. Better just stop reading here.

I would if I were you.

Well, I would if I could, but I can’t, because I have to write all this puzzle stuff now, don’t I?

Portugal is experiencing the hottest temperatures this week, with more than 40 degrees Celsius and it will continue.

I’ll leave the decision up to you. You’re all adults. Apart from all those third-formers recently signing up as translators to earn a few shekels as pocket money.

A few is right, but what odds if you still live at home with P+M?

The country has occurrences of forest fires difficult to deal with and that can become catastrophic.

Do you think I’m joking about third-formers?

A fireman died, and many of them are seriously injured.

Have you noticed that a certain ad on site seems to target very, very young translators?

Right now, I can see yellow choppers fighting fire from the air. Unfortunately, we see this brutality happening all over the world every year.

Is that a high chair the kid is sitting in, all sweaty and confused and FRUSTRATED with complicated TM tools?

People do not change...

Oh yes, PC1.

The first thing I noticed about PC1 was that everyone, and I mean everyone, down to the smallest child, was wearing a face mask. If we'd all followed the example of the people in PC1, we wouldn't be in this mess now.

And in PC1, people notice when you don’t wear one, too.

By the way, in the hugely unlikely event you were reading that last sentence aloud to someone who isn’t following the spelling, you might point out that was “one, too”, meaning “one, as well”, and not the consecutive numbers “one, two”, because the hypothetical listener hypothetically listening in this hypothetical-listener hypothesis would obviously be perplexed by the phrase “people notice when you don’t wear one, two”.

Now there, on the other mitt, I DO mean the consecutive numbers “one, two”, but perhaps we should get on …

Hard times Jul 23

Oh yes, … just as I was realising that I’d left my mask hanging on the chair in a restaurant on the third evening there, I’d covered barely five metres down that street before an old lady on her husband’s arm retorted grumpily as she passed by, “People get reported for not wearing a mask, you know!”

Her outraged demeanour suggested that she would be immediately reporting me herself to the very next copper she chanced upon, so I quickened my step as I returned to the restaurant to find the mask.

expressisverbis,

At the same time it also occurred to me that I had seen very few police officers on patrol in PC1.

A guided tour of a local monastery, oddly enough, reinforced my feeling that people in PC1 are used to doing what they’re told, and don’t need the police much.

I hadn’t actually asked for a guided tour, but a very plump, doleful lady took the money at the desk and gestured vaguely to an old man who’d been lurking in the corner and whose ancient joints audibly creaked as he wobbled over.

Actually she was more than doleful.

I turned to look at her as I went out the door, and she was staring with immense sadness at a painting of the Virgin on the wall.

Definitely a story there …

The tour guide was much more enthusiastic.

He said he was 84 years old, just past his birthday, and was merely an unofficial guide keeping himself busy in his retirement by showing the monastery to “those who have had the deference to visit my city”.

His exact words, which he repeated at least four times during the visit.

Sorry to hear that!

He certainly knew his stuff all right – dates, places, names, the lot.

He paused and stood stock still before a gravestone on the floor of the chapel, a man who had died in September 1936.

“Mr Such and Such,” he breathed in hushed reverence, “murdered by the Republican hordes at the beginning of the war”.

Now, I’ve read the phrase “Republican hordes” many times in literature written by pro-Franco historians, but never actually heard it said.

Like every single town and city in Spain at the beginning of the Civil War, this one was in the hands of those “Republican hordes” because, well, Spain was a republic at the time.

It wasn’t long before PC1 fell, and it was one of the first to be taken. Though not before a few local scores had been settled.

I did a quick calculation.

By the time this man was born, in the same year, PC1 had settled into almost forty years of dictatorship, and so he had breathed Franco day in day out for each and every one of his formative years. People well used to authority.

I really hope and pray that the weather changes soon and brings you rains and morning coolness.

Another pointer was the Spanish flags.

You see a Union Jack somewhere in Peterborough and it just means somebody’s patriotic, but a Spanish flag in PC1, and all over Spain, has a different nuance nowadays.

There’s been a lot of talk recently about the red and gold being hijacked by Spain’s right-wing factions, like it’s theirs and nobody else’s.

There were certainly a lot of them hanging on balconies, mostly with black mourning ribbons due to Covid-19, but I also saw one with the words “Sánchez lárgate” at the centre.

When someone takes the trouble to stencil a call for Spain’s socialist PM to sling his hook on their flag, you know what they’re about.

Coronavirus continues spreading in Ukraine, with more than 60 thousand cases overall and more than 26 thousand people being currently ill.

I’m not finished with PC1 and haven’t even started on PC2, but I simply can’t be bothered throwing it all out today, so I’ll leave it for a while, but meanwhile, ahead of many thousands of submissions by eager contestants, and although the Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle has naturally been cleared with the top brass at ProZ, I’ve been asked to make a few things clear on their behalf:

My mother in Kyiv was very sick last week, with 40 Grad fever which continued for 3 days.

COMPETITION RULES

The daughter of my best friend in Kyiv was also ill with the same symptoms.

First prize is an all-expenses-paid trip for two to PC1, and second prize is an all-expenses-paid trip for one to PC2.

Answers on a postcard, please, to the usual ProZ address in Syracuse, NY.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding, despite and/or pursuant to the foregoing, and/or furthermore, please note that nobody will read any and/or all communications you are gullible and/or unwise enough to send, and/or that the above prizes are necessarily fictitious and/or non-existent and/or unobtainable.

If you do not wish us to not refrain from not sending you a shedload of unwanted publicity and/or pop-ups and/or flash mails and/or text messages containing a barrowload of and/or phrases and/or directly/indirectlys and/or totally/partiallys, please do not forget to not uncheck the box below, under any and/or all, and/or indeed no circumstances.

Thank you.

Thank God they both recovered, but I pray for people in Ukraine and throughout the world to stay healthy and to overcome this epidemy soon.

I would risk

Oksana,

Sep 5

Jul 23

PC1 is a "comunidad autónoma" which first letter starts with a "G", and PC2 with a "B", but it's just a (bad) guess...

Here, people are choosing to go to rural places in Portugal with their families to enjoy their holidays.

Lisbon was in great trouble lately, and Porto seems to increase the figures now...

Oksana Weiss wrote:

"And here we go again on our own"?

Meanwhile, Coronavirus continues spreading in Ukraine, with more than 60 thousand cases overall and more than 26 thousand people being currently ill.

PC1 (continued)

Thank God your mother and the daughter of your friend have recovered!

Sep 6

Every time someone tells me a relative or friend has recovered, I feel very happy!

Sorry, expressisverbis, but no cigar. And they are cities, not autonomous communities, although the names of the cities in both cases are also the names of the provinces they're the capital of, which is the case for most (but not all) of Spain's provinces.

My young sister was infected too, but right now she is fine and went back to work at the hospital.

Anyway, I stayed at a singular place in PC1, the former residence of one of Spain’s most famous transition politicians who also made PM, now a hotel. His old office is now the hotel reception, adorned by photos of him hobnobbing with the old king. By old king I mean the former king, not the new king, but now the former king is an old king too, or rather an old former king.

In Portugal the number of infected people is slightly higher at the moment.

In fact, I heard about the Juan Carlos Departure Bombshell on the first night there. I wandered out to find a newspaper the next day. Someone told me there were only two places where newspapers were sold (??), and that one of them had just closed down. The woman in the shop told me I was lucky to even GET a paper, considering the Beeg News. It wasn't even a kiosko, full of school text books and whatnot. I had to wait five minutes while a very well-dressed lady demurred about her kids' books, but that didn't bother me as much as a sweaty pushy granny who barged in between the two of us to tell the shopkeeper she had been right about the cardigan, and that it had to be washed at medium temperature in a bowl with minimum wringing, and that María had helped her, but had said that Asun had advised against it, and that Aurelio hadn't been much help either, because he said that was a load of nonsense, and that his sister-in-law had said that ...

Deaths aren't increasing, but cases of this infection appear every day.

Slices of life, in other words. I lived for many years in another Spanish village, much much smaller than PC1, back in the 80s, where there were a lot of slices of life, some I liked and a lot more I didn't. I did my mandatory 18-year sentence of slices of life in Northern Ireland, I didn't like most of the slices I saw, heard and felt, and I got the hell out of there just as soon as I could, so I never lived there long enough to see all the slices it had to offer, but now I see that the slices are sliced just about everywhere and just about in every way, and not always the way you'd like ...

The weather remains hot, and fires still coming.

Afterwards I went across the square to read about JC's departure. It's a bar with a terrace of metal tables and chairs (do we even say terrace?). The woman in the newspaper shop that wasn't just a newspaper shop said it was the best bet. She was right, too. The lass with the auburn hair at the tables was certainly in control of her terrace, welcoming Paquita and Luisita and all the rest in what is essentially a vile task (I've worked in a few bars), plus now the masks and social distancing and hydroalcohol, cleaning tables, smiling constantly when people called out their orders as an aside while maintaining their own conversations, weaving her way among the patrons, picking up, setting down, serving, taking orders, correcting orders, ruffling kids' hair etc. with nary an angry word (I'd have been psychotic). As I watched, a bloke even came up and said he'd left his mobile phone at one of the tables a quarter of an hour previously. You'd have thought it had happened to her, the way she reacted. Even below the mask, you could see her face falling in empathy as she asked for his number and address and all the details, just in case it turned up, wrote it down on a napkin and all, amid heartrending sighs of pity and much eye-rolling. A wonderful place.

We will overcome this "beast" soon, together!

Oh yes, back to that hotel. The former PM wasn’t actually from PC1, but from a place out in the sticks. I just had to go there too, see where he came from. I parked the car, by total coincidence, in the street that now bears his name, and in fact I’d parked almost opposite the old family home. Out of curiosity, I asked in the grocery opposite what it had been called before that. When they told me what this street had been known as before, also a name, or rather two surnames, the Spanish format of the father’s surname first and the mother’s second, I was a little confused, because those were the surnames of the PM that came AFTER this one in the 80s, but then I remembered that this other former PM’s grandfather, with those same two surnames, had had the distinction of having sparked the Spanish Civil War, and so it had been a 30s politician it was named after.

We just need to keep the faith, be strong, and be very careful!

This other one’s grandad had been the leader of the right-wing opposition in parliament, and one night the police came to his house in Madrid and asked him to accompany them to the station for questioning. There’s more than one account of the events that followed. One of them is that he asked the policemen if he could make a phone call first, and that one of them ripped the phone off the wall, and said matter-of-factly “No, you can’t.” So things weren’t looking good. They also say he told Her Indoors he’d be back later, and added “Unless, of course, these gentlemen kill me.” And … guess what?

Stay safe!

He was found shot dead the next day outside a cemetery, and Spaniards pitched into their civil war a few days afterwards. Well, there isn’t much else you can do when the leader of the opposition is murdered by the powers-that-be. A tit-for-tat killing in retaliation for the murder of a left-wing Assault Guard the day before, it must be said. Assault Guard is a curious term for a policeman, but that’s what he was.

Warm regards, and my virtual hug!

Anyway, I decided to have a beer at the plaza in the village. Busy little bar. One waiter. It took ages. He forgot the olives. He forgot the other tapa. He forgot everything. Meanwhile I went across the street to the dime store, for want of a better term, and asked if they sold papers. They didn’t. Where can I buy one?

"Together"

Shrug. Left the place, and found a newsagent’s two doors down (so what's with the shrug?). Came back. Still hadn’t brought the tapa. Paid (which took me ten minutes). By the time I left, I realised why the former PM had wanted to get out. Although I’d had another pointer on the way there, stopping at a village five or six kilometres from there to fill up with petrol and asking for directions, make sure I was on the right road. The woman at the desk said I was. I asked if it was worth going to, and she said, “No idea. Never been there. We don’t get on with the people in that village.” Never been there?

Jul 30

This woman must have been in her 40s or 50s, and she’d never been to a place that close, just knew the people were a bad lot?

No offence meant, Oksana and expressisverbis, but to elaborate on another moment during this thread, I think all that initial togetherness and solidarity went down the toilet a long time ago.

Curiouser and curiouser.

At local level, regional level, national level, EU level and international level, I don't think the bickering and accusations could be worse, plus you hear about them together all the time through the media, always glad to showcase the horror of it all.

Then there were the lentils I wanted to buy. “Lentils?

Here my lower-level basis is Spain, but it could apply to most countries these days:

Come on,” breathed the Basques behind me as I insisted on going to this shop. “Of course they’ll tell you they have the best in the world.” But I was undeterred. Thing is, just before I set out from Bilbao, I’d realised we had run out of lentils, and everyone knows the best are to be found in this region, and in fact those I buy here are from the region. And they WERE excellent – I bought them at an Alimentación place in the city, one of those old traditional places where they have all the legumes in white sacks, and a small bald man puts them into paper packets on the scales, gradually decreasing the load being shovelled in with the little stainless steel spade as he gets up to 930 g … 950 g … 980 g … and finally stopping at 1,000 g.

Here the Town Hall presents something, the opposition says bollocks, the Basque Government makes a statement, and the opposition says bollocks, Sánchez says something, and the opposition says bollocks, Spain and the rest say something, and Rutte and Co. say bollocks, China says something, and the US says bollocks.

There was another man in there too, who seemed to be the owner, because he acted like it (strutting around behind the counter, talking and talking and doing nothing while the minions served out their legumes and wrapped up chorizo and whatnot), and I remember him for his language. I thought he might have been drinking heavily just before that (certainly his huge belly indicated a tendency in that direction), because every other word seemed to be a cuss. The poetic licence of entrepreneurship. You do what you like when you have a superior product!

That's our glorified representatives talking.

Well, that’s PC1. I enjoyed it hugely, also the food, and I definitely had to try the locals’ famed meat chop and beans, but, like many places you enjoy on holiday, I don’t think I’d fancy being walled up in there as a permanent resident.

Nobody is going to help.

Next up, PC2. Stand by.

You take it down to street level, and people are ready to turn to crime after over 12 years of belt-tightening in all the wrong places.

PC2 (much shorter, don't fret, assuming you've even got this far)

page-31

PC2 is quite a bit smaller than PC1, and a teensy bit too provincial for me. I stayed at the “parador” hotel way up above the town, and thought at first I’d have to use the car all the time during the stay, judging by the long drive snaking up to it from the main drag, but they have a clever shortcut path down to the town which only takes 6 minutes on foot.

Portugalsko

This is one of Spain’s lesser known PCs. Its most famous son, or rather adopted son, who wasn’t actually from anywhere near there but became associated with it (which I hadn’t realised before I went there), was a poet who penned many bootiful lines about this part of rural Spain. He had originally gone there to teach French at a school. The visit was vaguely cathartic for me, because I had to study his poetry at my own school, and I must say I hated it, but then everyone hates erudite poetry in their teens.

Local time: 12:08

His name’s all over the place in the town now – not only is his old school named after him, but streets and monuments too. Even my hotel up on the hill. I visited his wife’s grave, one of the must-sees in PC2. She’s been lying there since 1912, with the old elm tree frazzled by lightning her husband wrote about, still frazzled, just outside the church and cemetery. Dead at 18. When he was around 37. I didn’t know that either. Hmm. Then you realise they were married for 3 years AND he had to spend a year in courtship AND wait another year until she was of legal age at 15. Hmm again. Made me think of Lewis Carroll and the little Alice muse the other Alice’s adventures are supposed to be based on. Different times ...

(2015)

There wasn’t really a lot to do in PC2 - not that I was looking for lots to do, because all I wanted was a rest from Bilbao – but once you’d checked out the poet’s story and wandered down the main street and a few others, it was like any other small town, bustling and quaint. This was under the August sun, though – can’t say I’d fancy it in winter, when the thermometer plunges farther than many other regions in this country.

The food was good. Most of the region’s usual fare, plus the province’s speciality of “torreznos”, or crispy-fried pork rind. Just looking at it hardens the arteries. When the king and queen were doing their upbeat solidarity walkabout at various locations in Spain a few months ago to raise people’s spirits, they ended up somewhere around here, and I remember the footage of the queen being offered torreznos by the locals. I suppose Letizia had to accept graciously, noblesse oblige and all that, but I doubt if the queen, noted for her admirable slimness, ate any of them afterwards. Me, I ate one, but only one. Dangerously tasty, but the food you relish is rarely the food you should eat.

Aug 3

By the way, I meant the current king and the current queen back there, or rather the new king and the new queen, as opposed to the former king and the former queen, who are also necessarily the old king and the old queen. In both senses. Although obviously I don't mean that "old queen" in a possible third sense. However, the old king and the old queen still retain some of the kingly and queenly trappings. Not as many as before because the old king screwed up, and got his wrists slapped for it by his son, the new king. So, fewer privileges, which is good news for taxpayers, because before it wasn’t precisely a case of a new king and an old king plus a new queen and an old queen for the price of just one new king and one new queen. No, the great unwashed used to shell out for all four at once - the new king and the new queen, and the old king and the old queen. Plus a few Hellenic hangers-on here and there. Beware of Greeks taking gifts, more like, rather than bearing them.

No offence meant, Oksana and expressisverbis, but to elaborate on another moment during this thread, I think all that initial togetherness and solidarity went down the toilet a long time ago. At local level, regional level, national level, EU level and international level, I don't think the bickering and accusations could be worse, plus you hear about them together all the time through the media, always glad to showcase the horror of it all. Here my lower-level basis is Spain, but it could apply to most countries these days:

So that’s PC2. I know it’s a lot shorter than PC1, but frankly I’ve other things to do, and simply couldn’t be bothered dragging it out any longer. Make your educated guesses, and send them in to ProZ for no good reason. All rather thrilling, isn’t it?

Here the Town Hall presents something, the opposition says bollocks, the Basque Government makes a statement, and the opposition says bollocks, Sánchez says something, and the opposition says bollocks, Spain and the rest say something, and Rutte and Co. say bollocks, China says something, and the US says bollocks. That's our glorified representatives talking. Nobody is going to help. You take it down to street level, and people are ready to turn to crime after over 12 years of belt-tightening in all the wrong places.

I’ll be back with the answers at some point. In the wake of a deluge of Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle postcards.

No, I don't feel personally ofended.

Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle – contest cancelled (but those answers in full)

You're right, everyone talks nonsense, and we need to see a light in this very gloomy situation, and yet we can't see it. The world seems to be upside down, but I need to be optimistic and sympathise with the human being. This is what keeps my mind sane beyond other things. We need hope: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qZVb2xG8nI Don't lose it!

Sep 8

Španělsko

Yes, I’m afraid the Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle has been called off because it was far too popular and has led to the near-collapse of ProZ in Syracuse, with bags of postcards jamming up the offices, the corridors, the broom closets, the toilets, the lobby and away down the street in a matter of only two days, leading to angry visits by the police, the health authorities and environmental inspectors.

Local time: 13:08

In an implausible scenario, which is understandable because it’s being made up as I go along, Henry rang to say enough is enough. Amid a constant whirring in the background, I could just make out the hoarse tones, the desperate pleas of a desperate man in a desperate situation:

“Stop the madness,” he croaked desperately in a desperate voice of desperation, “Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle postcards are arriving faster than we can shred them here. You’re a wretched victim of your own wretched success.”

španělština

“Crikey,” I thought, listening to the harsh gritty sound of strips of cardboard being rapidly torn to ribbons, “what a class phrase. Wish I’d said that.” Still, I can console myself with the fact that at least I wrote it.

Those answers, for what it's worth …

Everyone expects the Spanish Imposition

PC1 is Ávila, with a huge clincher clue in the last sentence, “walled up …”, a reference to the 11th century defensive wall and towers around the city standing some 12 metres tall, and still in pretty good nick since the high Middle Ages. Particularly impressive when you see it all lit up at night, fully visible from a considerable distance.

Sep 4

PC2 is Soria, and that poet who wasn’t a local lad but who nevertheless done good, Antonio Machado, originally from Sevilla.

Yes, we had the pre-lockdown, the lockdown, the post-lockdown, and now the could-be-very-likely-lockdown again because during the post-lockdown we behaved exactly as we did during the pre-lockdown, except with much more pent-up enthusiasm due to the months of lockdown.

All I can say is well done to the thousands upon thousands upon thousands of contestants who sent in postcards in the unlikely hope of a Spanish freebie, but unfortunately the gig is null and void and you’ve wasted the price of the postcard, the price of the postage, and the price of your time. Don’t blame me, blame the management, even though I’ve been asked to remind you on its behalf that “management accepts no liability and/or responsibility and/or culpability whatsoever, wheresoever and indeed whysoever for any direct and/or indirect losses and/or damages and/or legal fees whichsoever and/or whensoever”.

What can I say?

Thank God it's over, I say.

We had our chance and we blew it. Spain’s a no-no for travel, trade and travails because we failed to make use of our common sense, which would appear to be the least common of the senses. Too depressing to write about now, so more about that later. Meanwhile, on the generally lighter note I generally strive to hit in the general interest, introducing the:

Antonio Machado

Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle

Many thanks, Mervyn!

I couldn’t think of anything else suitable beginning with P to draw out the alliteration, an operation I admit was totally unnecessary. Feel free to write in with any additional Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle Post “P” Proposals, but I warn you you’ll be wasting your time because neither I nor anyone else will take any notice.

I did not know this Spanish poet. As a big fan of poetry, this weekend I know for sure where I go to find his books!

Now where was I?

To Die in Madrid

Oh yes, the Puzzle. To cut a long story short (me!!

Sep 18

I know, I can hear you laughing), I’ve been on holiday in two provincial capitals here in the Spanish State, which I’ll slyly and enigmatically refer to as PC1 and PC2, and your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to guess which two Spanish cities I’m talking about. Spaniards, Johnny Foreigners living over here and Hispanophiles should be able to identify them without much trouble, especially since I’ve included at least one decisive pointer for each. Today we’ll kick off with PC1. And please read the competition rules. If you prefer, you can skip the first instalment of PC1 inbetween, and go straight to the competition rules, but there wouldn’t be much point in doing that, would there, because then you wouldn’t be able to enter the competition. Better just stop reading here. I would if I were you. Well, I would if I could, but I can’t, because I have to write all this puzzle stuff now, don’t I?

What a to-do. A long time ago I mentioned the wringing of hands, the renting of clothes, the tearing of hair and the gnashing of teeth from certain parts of the country, amid outraged cries at what they called a virtual coup d’état imposed on the nation by PM Sánchez, who was apparently gripping the Reins of State so tightly that Spain’s autonomous regions had no say in anything at all.

I’ll leave the decision up to you. You’re all adults. Apart from all those third-formers recently signing up as translators to earn a few shekels as pocket money. A few is right, but what odds if you still live at home with P+M?

Especially from Madrid, where the region is not governed by Mr S’s party, but by the Partido Popular, led by President Díaz Ayuso. It’s not a political viewpoint, but I find Ms Isabel frankly disturbing. It’s those come-to-death eyes of hers, I think. Anyway, Sánchez put up with the moaning for a while, and when things had relaxed slightly, he said, “OK, fine, you win, all the autonomous communities can handle their own Covid affairs from now on.” After a few rounds of the usual grumpy, huffy “About time, too”-ing, the communities happily set to work to govern their own affairs. …

Do you think I’m joking about third-formers?

Guess what?

Have you noticed that a certain ad on site seems to target very, very young translators?

Yes, Madrid now has the same number of Covid patients in intensive care as it had in May, and the ICUs are close to breaking point. Contagion is on the up and up, and Old Mr Death is popping by much more often again. Plus, all that erstwhile hero worship of the health care fraternity/sorority seems to be on the wane. A nurse was on TV last night, reporting that the hospital was being subjected to a daily round of foul-mouthed abuse by the great unwashed trying to get in. The same thing is happening to social security offices, where you have to queue for hours to sort out mum’s pension or your unemployment benefit because the Internet option simply doesn’t work, phone pressure has led to them posting a pay number for queries, add to this the pupils and teachers all streaming back to the schools and people going back to work, and all in all they’re already talking about locking down the capital again.

Is that a high chair the kid is sitting in, all sweaty and confused and FRUSTRATED with complicated TM tools?

Except they aren’t using the dreaded L Word. Not yet, anyway. The words “restrictions”, “certain problematic areas” and “occasional emergencies” sound much more effective, friendly and reassuring, and less desperate, doom-ridden and gloomy.

Oh yes, PC1. The first thing I noticed about PC1 was that everyone, and I mean everyone, down to the smallest child, was wearing a face mask. If we'd all followed the example of the people in PC1, we wouldn't be in this mess now. And in PC1, people notice when you don’t wear one, too. By the way, in the hugely unlikely event you were reading that last sentence aloud to someone who isn’t following the spelling, you might point out that was “one, too”, meaning “one, as well”, and not the consecutive numbers “one, two”, because the hypothetical listener hypothetically listening in this hypothetical-listener hypothesis would obviously be perplexed by the phrase “people notice when you don’t wear one, two”. Now there, on the other mitt, I DO mean the consecutive numbers “one, two”, but perhaps we should get on …

That coup situation is looking more attractive by the day.

Oh yes, … just as I was realising that I’d left my mask hanging on the chair in a restaurant on the third evening there, I’d covered barely five metres down that street before an old lady on her husband’s arm retorted grumpily as she passed by, “People get reported for not wearing a mask, you know!” Her outraged demeanour suggested that she would be immediately reporting me herself to the very next copper she chanced upon, so I quickened my step as I returned to the restaurant to find the mask.

Meanwhile ...

At the same time it also occurred to me that I had seen very few police officers on patrol in PC1. A guided tour of a local monastery, oddly enough, reinforced my feeling that people in PC1 are used to doing what they’re told, and don’t need the police much. I hadn’t actually asked for a guided tour, but a very plump, doleful lady took the money at the desk and gestured vaguely to an old man who’d been lurking in the corner and whose ancient joints audibly creaked as he wobbled over. Actually she was more than doleful. I turned to look at her as I went out the door, and she was staring with immense sadness at a painting of the Virgin on the wall. Definitely a story there … The tour guide was much more enthusiastic. He said he was 84 years old, just past his birthday, and was merely an unofficial guide keeping himself busy in his retirement by showing the monastery to “those who have had the deference to visit my city”. His exact words, which he repeated at least four times during the visit.

Meanwhile, it’s always useful to have a scapegoat. Possibly hategoat might be a better word, if I can use that one. Yes, why not, a hategoat, someone to hate, a decoy, because hatred is forever, unlike love.

He certainly knew his stuff all right – dates, places, names, the lot. He paused and stood stock still before a gravestone on the floor of the chapel, a man who had died in September 1936. “Mr Such and Such,” he breathed in hushed reverence, “murdered by the Republican hordes at the beginning of the war”. Now, I’ve read the phrase “Republican hordes” many times in literature written by pro-Franco historians, but never actually heard it said. Like every single town and city in Spain at the beginning of the Civil War, this one was in the hands of those “Republican hordes” because, well, Spain was a republic at the time. It wasn’t long before PC1 fell, and it was one of the first to be taken. Though not before a few local scores had been settled. I did a quick calculation. By the time this man was born, in the same year, PC1 had settled into almost forty years of dictatorship, and so he had breathed Franco day in day out for each and every one of his formative years. People well used to authority.

And who better than a Royal?

Another pointer was the Spanish flags. You see a Union Jack somewhere in Peterborough and it just means somebody’s patriotic, but a Spanish flag in PC1, and all over Spain, has a different nuance nowadays. There’s been a lot of talk recently about the red and gold being hijacked by Spain’s right-wing factions, like it’s theirs and nobody else’s. There were certainly a lot of them hanging on balconies, mostly with black mourning ribbons due to Covid-19, but I also saw one with the words “Sánchez lárgate” at the centre. When someone takes the trouble to stencil a call for Spain’s socialist PM to sling his hook on their flag, you know what they’re about.

Despite the ruling socialist party’s best efforts to play down the shenanigans of Rex Emeritus. Yes, you read that right. You might think that lefties would be quick to jump on any untoward goings-on by the regals, but not here. The socialists have been operating a “you-scratch-my-back-I’ll-scratch-yours” policy with the Palace People since they found in the mid-80s that power was quite nice, and they wanted to hang on to it, and if that meant letting Juanca do da mess-around wherever and whenever he wanted in exchange, then so be it.

I’m not finished with PC1 and haven’t even started on PC2, but I simply can’t be bothered throwing it all out today, so I’ll leave it for a while, but meanwhile, ahead of many thousands of submissions by eager contestants, and although the Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle has naturally been cleared with the top brass at ProZ, I’ve been asked to make a few things clear on their behalf:

No, in this country it’s the right wing that secretly despises the royals much more. In public it’s all jingoistic lip-service, but in private they think the monarchy has too many privileges for too little work, and doesn’t deserve its status.

COMPETITION RULES

A juicy tale is now unfolding about what journalists like to call the “sewers of the state”, too complicated to go into until next time, but suffice it to say that it’s a tale of Swiss bank accounts creaking with illicit dosh, the terrible revenge of a woman who would be queen scorned, veiled threats against her by the Spanish secret service, and a photo of an ex-rex in his seventies cooking up burgers on a barbie in shorts and a baseball cap on back to front, while the femme fatale’s kid looks on.

First prize is an all-expenses-paid trip for two to PC1, and second prize is an all-expenses-paid trip for one to PC2. Answers on a postcard, please, to the usual ProZ address in Syracuse, NY. Nevertheless, notwithstanding, despite and/or pursuant to the foregoing, and/or furthermore, please note that nobody will read any and/or all communications you are gullible and/or unwise enough to send, and/or that the above prizes are necessarily fictitious and/or non-existent and/or unobtainable. If you do not wish us to not refrain from not sending you a shedload of unwanted publicity and/or pop-ups and/or flash mails and/or text messages containing a barrowload of and/or phrases and/or directly/indirectlys and/or totally/partiallys, please do not forget to not uncheck the box below, under any and/or all, and/or indeed no circumstances. Thank you.

I hope Old Mr. Death or Old Mrs. Infection don't go up again

I would risk

We are all in the same boat. Our Prime Minister, Mr. "Toninho" Costa is saying we will reach a high number of cases and deaths in the coming month.

Sep 5

Correction: "... in the coming week"!

PC1 is a "comunidad autónoma" which first letter starts with a "G", and PC2 with a "B", but it's just a (bad) guess... Here, people are choosing to go to rural places in Portugal with their families to enjoy their holidays. Lisbon was in great trouble lately, and Porto seems to increase the figures now...

Bourbon shot

"And here we go again on our own"?

Sep 19

PC1 (continued)

No, I don’t mean the famous drink, but rather the Borbón dynasty now ruling over the Spanish realm, which the Anglos call the Bourbons. There may well be a connection between them and the drink somewhere, but I’m unaware of it. Although the chattering classes do say that Juan Carlos’s red-hot chat-up line to distant relation and future wife Sofía when they met at the Duke of Kent’s 1961 wedding in York was “Fancy a Bourbon, love?”. Well, no, I must confess I made that one up ...

Sep 6

It’s been a mixed bag for JC over the years – years of uncertainty before he was allowed to become king by an ageing despot, years of tension when he eventually did, amid rumours of unrest among a disgruntled military in the post-Franco period, and even a real coup in 1981, the glory years as Saviour of the Nation and King of All Spaniards afterwards, and finally an inglorious descent into years of disgrace and abdication, and more disgrace even after that. And why?

Sorry, expressisverbis, but no cigar. And they are cities, not autonomous communities, although the names of the cities in both cases are also the names of the provinces they're the capital of, which is the case for most (but not all) of Spain's provinces.

Women and money, money and women. “Couldn’t keep his hands off the kitty, or off the titty either,” tattle those in the know. Same old same old.

Anyway, I stayed at a singular place in PC1, the former residence of one of Spain’s most famous transition politicians who also made PM, now a hotel. His old office is now the hotel reception, adorned by photos of him hobnobbing with the old king. By old king I mean the former king, not the new king, but now the former king is an old king too, or rather an old former king.

The initial years were marked by tragedy. No two ways about it – accidentally killing your brother is rarely good for PR. A fateful tale, which is nevertheless played down a lot, understandably. He was just lucky it happened when the 18-year old JC and his family were holidaying down in Estoril at Easter.

In fact, I heard about the Juan Carlos Departure Bombshell on the first night there. I wandered out to find a newspaper the next day. Someone told me there were only two places where newspapers were sold (??), and that one of them had just closed down. The woman in the shop told me I was lucky to even GET a paper, considering the Beeg News. It wasn't even a kiosko, full of school text books and whatnot. I had to wait five minutes while a very well-dressed lady demurred about her kids' books, but that didn't bother me as much as a sweaty pushy granny who barged in between the two of us to tell the shopkeeper she had been right about the cardigan, and that it had to be washed at medium temperature in a bowl with minimum wringing, and that María had helped her, but had said that Asun had advised against it, and that Aurelio hadn't been much help either, because he said that was a load of nonsense, and that his sister-in-law had said that ...

In any other circumstances there would have been an investigation, but I assume since Salazar of Portugal was besties with Franco, who was just starting to groom Juanca for after his demise, being wily enough to pass over his old fox of a father, the Count of Barcelona, who had been hovering in the wings for years waiting for his daddy's throne back, it went no further than a tragic accident. An accident that led to an in-joke ditty often recited among the regal classes of Europe and beyond – “Two little royals, playing with a gun, it went off by accident, and then there was one.” Well, no, I made that one up too. But I know you believed it for a couple of milliseconds ...

Slices of life, in other words. I lived for many years in another Spanish village, much much smaller than PC1, back in the 80s, where there were a lot of slices of life, some I liked and a lot more I didn't. I did my mandatory 18-year sentence of slices of life in Northern Ireland, I didn't like most of the slices I saw, heard and felt, and I got the hell out of there just as soon as I could, so I never lived there long enough to see all the slices it had to offer, but now I see that the slices are sliced just about everywhere and just about in every way, and not always the way you'd like ...

… Other than that it had been a normal day for his younger brother Alfonso, and he'd even won a golf tournament that very morning. There are several versions of the event: Juanca said he didn't know the gun was loaded, and his sis said their 15-year old bruv was carrying some eats into their room - since his hands were full he pushed open the door with his shoulder, and thus a little too brusquely. Juanca was inside next to the door, standing there examining the gun ...

Afterwards I went across the square to read about JC's departure. It's a bar with a terrace of metal tables and chairs (do we even say terrace?). The woman in the newspaper shop that wasn't just a newspaper shop said it was the best bet. She was right, too. The lass with the auburn hair at the tables was certainly in control of her terrace, welcoming Paquita and Luisita and all the rest in what is essentially a vile task (I've worked in a few bars), plus now the masks and social distancing and hydroalcohol, cleaning tables, smiling constantly when people called out their orders as an aside while maintaining their own conversations, weaving her way among the patrons, picking up, setting down, serving, taking orders, correcting orders, ruffling kids' hair etc. with nary an angry word (I'd have been psychotic). As I watched, a bloke even came up and said he'd left his mobile phone at one of the tables a quarter of an hour previously. You'd have thought it had happened to her, the way she reacted. Even below the mask, you could see her face falling in empathy as she asked for his number and address and all the details, just in case it turned up, wrote it down on a napkin and all, amid heartrending sighs of pity and much eye-rolling. A wonderful place.

Some of the more irresponsible chroniclers have gone so far as to venture that “lying in wait” would be a more accurate description, but you know how people gossip about royals and their jealousies and hatreds. Just cast your mind back to all the conspiracy theories about Diana and Dodi in that tunnel. Ridiculous, wasn’t it?

Oh yes, back to that hotel. The former PM wasn’t actually from PC1, but from a place out in the sticks. I just had to go there too, see where he came from. I parked the car, by total coincidence, in the street that now bears his name, and in fact I’d parked almost opposite the old family home. Out of curiosity, I asked in the grocery opposite what it had been called before that. When they told me what this street had been known as before, also a name, or rather two surnames, the Spanish format of the father’s surname first and the mother’s second, I was a little confused, because those were the surnames of the PM that came AFTER this one in the 80s, but then I remembered that this other former PM’s grandfather, with those same two surnames, had had the distinction of having sparked the Spanish Civil War, and so it had been a 30s politician it was named after.

Of course it was. When everyone knows the traffic’s murder in Paris. And the whisperers are still whispering these days, too, oh my, yes, because that kind of thing never goes away, does it?

This other one’s grandad had been the leader of the right-wing opposition in parliament, and one night the police came to his house in Madrid and asked him to accompany them to the station for questioning. There’s more than one account of the events that followed. One of them is that he asked the policemen if he could make a phone call first, and that one of them ripped the phone off the wall, and said matter-of-factly “No, you can’t.” So things weren’t looking good. They also say he told Her Indoors he’d be back later, and added “Unless, of course, these gentlemen kill me.” And … guess what?

Look at the knives being taken out and gleefully sharpened for Meghan Markle, for instance.

He was found shot dead the next day outside a cemetery, and Spaniards pitched into their civil war a few days afterwards. Well, there isn’t much else you can do when the leader of the opposition is murdered by the powers-that-be. A tit-for-tat killing in retaliation for the murder of a left-wing Assault Guard the day before, it must be said. Assault Guard is a curious term for a policeman, but that’s what he was.

But I digress. Anyway, what happened in Estoril was that the door hit JC’s arm unexpectedly, and Bang, you’re dead. But like I say, many of the details were hushed up because no inquiry was held. For example, to this very day no one knows whether or not the runner-up in the tournament was awarded the cup instead.

Anyway, I decided to have a beer at the plaza in the village. Busy little bar. One waiter. It took ages. He forgot the olives. He forgot the other tapa. He forgot everything. Meanwhile I went across the street to the dime store, for want of a better term, and asked if they sold papers. They didn’t. Where can I buy one?

Some outrageous analysts even came up with a hugely far-fetched Second-Shooter Theory, on the grounds that the large bay window of the room was open, and that an elevated “grassy knoll” outside would have had a perfect line of vision for a rifle-toting teenager incensed after losing to young Alfonso out on the links, and scheming with Juanca to extract a terrible 19th hole revenge in exchange for the additional long-term incentive of elephant-hunting freebies and compliant Northern European aristocratesses when JC eventually clinched the throne. One gun might miss, but two make it a dead cert. When these people asked the Palace to comment, they apparently came up against a stone wall, which only served to heighten their suspicions of an omertà cover-up.

Shrug. Left the place, and found a newsagent’s two doors down (so what's with the shrug?). Came back. Still hadn’t brought the tapa. Paid (which took me ten minutes). By the time I left, I realised why the former PM had wanted to get out. Although I’d had another pointer on the way there, stopping at a village five or six kilometres from there to fill up with petrol and asking for directions, make sure I was on the right road. The woman at the desk said I was. I asked if it was worth going to, and she said, “No idea. Never been there. We don’t get on with the people in that village.” Never been there?

To Vie in Madrid

This woman must have been in her 40s or 50s, and she’d never been to a place that close, just knew the people were a bad lot?

Sep 22

Curiouser and curiouser.

There follows a secret recording of yesterday’s all-important meeting between Pedro Sánchez and Isabel Díaz Ayuso in Madrid. To keep things simple, the two speakers are KiSA (Knight in Shining Armour) and PoD (Princess of Darkness):

Then there were the lentils I wanted to buy. “Lentils?

Scene: a room in Casa de Correos, Puerta del Sol, with black candles burning all around. Huge upside-down cross on wall behind desk. Eery chanting music in background.

Come on,” breathed the Basques behind me as I insisted on going to this shop. “Of course they’ll tell you they have the best in the world.” But I was undeterred. Thing is, just before I set out from Bilbao, I’d realised we had run out of lentils, and everyone knows the best are to be found in this region, and in fact those I buy here are from the region. And they WERE excellent – I bought them at an Alimentación place in the city, one of those old traditional places where they have all the legumes in white sacks, and a small bald man puts them into paper packets on the scales, gradually decreasing the load being shovelled in with the little stainless steel spade as he gets up to 930 g … 950 g … 980 g … and finally stopping at 1,000 g.

KiSA (peering around in the gloom): Wow, not much light in here, is there?

There was another man in there too, who seemed to be the owner, because he acted like it (strutting around behind the counter, talking and talking and doing nothing while the minions served out their legumes and wrapped up chorizo and whatnot), and I remember him for his language. I thought he might have been drinking heavily just before that (certainly his huge belly indicated a tendency in that direction), because every other word seemed to be a cuss. The poetic licence of entrepreneurship. You do what you like when you have a superior product!

Could we roll down all those blinds and open some of the shutters?

Well, that’s PC1. I enjoyed it hugely, also the food, and I definitely had to try the locals’ famed meat chop and beans, but, like many places you enjoy on holiday, I don’t think I’d fancy being walled up in there as a permanent resident.

PoD: No, we can’t, I’m afraid. I’m, er, allergic to direct sunlight. That's why I'm so pale.

Next up, PC2. Stand by.

KiSA: Thanks for calling me to this meeting to help you. I just want to know how I can help. That’s what I’ve come to do, to help, you see. There’s nothing wrong with asking for help, you know. Nobody’s going to laugh. All you have to do is admit you can’t cope, and simply ask for help. I certainly won’t be levelling any accusations at you because you aren’t doing your job properly, and that’s why you’re in this mess. I’d just like to make that clear. All I want to do is help, and I can assure you I haven’t come to gloat and make you sorry you kept asking me months ago to decentralise and let you bring off a miserable, pathetic failure all on your own. So, when do you want me to declare a state of alarm in Madrid?

PC2 (much shorter, don't fret, assuming you've even got this far)

PoD: I don’t want you to declare a state of alarm in Madrid, because that means it’s me that really does need help. But I also wish to thank you for calling me to this meeting to help you, our beautiful capital and seat of government, and Spaniards everywhere, because Madrid is Spain, and Spain is Madrid. But at the moment I can’t help you because we have no doctors or nurses in Madrid. And we have no doctors or nurses because you didn’t allow me to pay them enough, and now they’ve all gone off to work in the UK.

PC2 is quite a bit smaller than PC1, and a teensy bit too provincial for me. I stayed at the “parador” hotel way up above the town, and thought at first I’d have to use the car all the time during the stay, judging by the long drive snaking up to it from the main drag, but they have a clever shortcut path down to the town which only takes 6 minutes on foot.

KiSA: What's that got to do with it?

This is one of Spain’s lesser known PCs. Its most famous son, or rather adopted son, who wasn’t actually from anywhere near there but became associated with it (which I hadn’t realised before I went there), was a poet who penned many bootiful lines about this part of rural Spain. He had originally gone there to teach French at a school. The visit was vaguely cathartic for me, because I had to study his poetry at my own school, and I must say I hated it, but then everyone hates erudite poetry in their teens.

So, how about declaring a state of alarm in Madrid?

His name’s all over the place in the town now – not only is his old school named after him, but streets and monuments too. Even my hotel up on the hill. I visited his wife’s grave, one of the must-sees in PC2. She’s been lying there since 1912, with the old elm tree frazzled by lightning her husband wrote about, still frazzled, just outside the church and cemetery. Dead at 18. When he was around 37. I didn’t know that either. Hmm. Then you realise they were married for 3 years AND he had to spend a year in courtship AND wait another year until she was of legal age at 15. Hmm again. Made me think of Lewis Carroll and the little Alice muse the other Alice’s adventures are supposed to be based on. Different times ...

PoD: No, no state of alarm, please. And the UK is a smaller country, although it has a larger population. And even larger now with all those Spanish doctors and nurses. And the population of its capital is much larger than Madrid’s. I know. I was there on Erasmus.

There wasn’t really a lot to do in PC2 - not that I was looking for lots to do, because all I wanted was a rest from Bilbao – but once you’d checked out the poet’s story and wandered down the main street and a few others, it was like any other small town, bustling and quaint. This was under the August sun, though – can’t say I’d fancy it in winter, when the thermometer plunges farther than many other regions in this country.

KiSA: So what?

The food was good. Most of the region’s usual fare, plus the province’s speciality of “torreznos”, or crispy-fried pork rind. Just looking at it hardens the arteries. When the king and queen were doing their upbeat solidarity walkabout at various locations in Spain a few months ago to raise people’s spirits, they ended up somewhere around here, and I remember the footage of the queen being offered torreznos by the locals. I suppose Letizia had to accept graciously, noblesse oblige and all that, but I doubt if the queen, noted for her admirable slimness, ate any of them afterwards. Me, I ate one, but only one. Dangerously tasty, but the food you relish is rarely the food you should eat.

What do you mean by all that?

By the way, I meant the current king and the current queen back there, or rather the new king and the new queen, as opposed to the former king and the former queen, who are also necessarily the old king and the old queen. In both senses. Although obviously I don't mean that "old queen" in a possible third sense. However, the old king and the old queen still retain some of the kingly and queenly trappings. Not as many as before because the old king screwed up, and got his wrists slapped for it by his son, the new king. So, fewer privileges, which is good news for taxpayers, because before it wasn’t precisely a case of a new king and an old king plus a new queen and an old queen for the price of just one new king and one new queen. No, the great unwashed used to shell out for all four at once - the new king and the new queen, and the old king and the old queen. Plus a few Hellenic hangers-on here and there. Beware of Greeks taking gifts, more like, rather than bearing them.

Maybe they need a state of alarm too. Like you.

So that’s PC2. I know it’s a lot shorter than PC1, but frankly I’ve other things to do, and simply couldn’t be bothered dragging it out any longer. Make your educated guesses, and send them in to ProZ for no good reason. All rather thrilling, isn’t it?

PoD: I’m not entirely sure what I mean, but as a politician it certainly proves my point, don’t you think?

I’ll be back with the answers at some point. In the wake of a deluge of Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle postcards.

KiSA: So what do you want me to do?

Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle – contest cancelled (but those answers in full)

I’m here to help, remember, not to criticise or find fault or expound on defects, flaws, mistakes, gross underestimations, gross overconfidence, gross incompetence, gross arrogance, gross miscalculations, errors of premise or hypothesis. Only to help. Just tell me when you want me to announce a state of alarm in Madrid, and I’ll do it, take over the whole shooting match, like I did before, things will soon calm down, you’ll see, all this will just be a bad memory for you, and you won’t need to do anything. Except maybe find a job, because you might not last very long in this one, considering all the murmuring in your own party.

Sep 8

PoD: What I need is a plan.

Yes, I’m afraid the Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle has been called off because it was far too popular and has led to the near-collapse of ProZ in Syracuse, with bags of postcards jamming up the offices, the corridors, the broom closets, the toilets, the lobby and away down the street in a matter of only two days, leading to angry visits by the police, the health authorities and environmental inspectors.

KiSA: A plan?

In an implausible scenario, which is understandable because it’s being made up as I go along, Henry rang to say enough is enough. Amid a constant whirring in the background, I could just make out the hoarse tones, the desperate pleas of a desperate man in a desperate situation:

Well, why didn’t you say so in the first place?

“Stop the madness,” he croaked desperately in a desperate voice of desperation, “Pointless ProZ Post-Plague Provincial Puzzle postcards are arriving faster than we can shred them here. You’re a wretched victim of your own wretched success.”

I’ll go straight back to Moncloa and have a long chat with my advisers in the gardens to draw up a plan to announce a state of alarm. I suggest you go back to your huge hotel room and wait for me to send you my state of alarm plan.

“Crikey,” I thought, listening to the harsh gritty sound of strips of cardboard being rapidly torn to ribbons, “what a class phrase. Wish I’d said that.” Still, I can console myself with the fact that at least I wrote it.

PoD: Please stop talking about a state of alarm. And I can’t go back out there until the sun goes down, I mean I will be working tirelessly here until dead of night for all the people of Madrid and all the people of Spain. I’m glad I was able to help you with your problem.

Those answers, for what it's worth …

KiSA: And I’m glad I was able to help you with your problem. We can call the plan the Non-State of Alarm Plan if you like. That means I won’t actually announce a state of alarm, but we’ll enact a state of alarm in secret anyway without calling it that, and no one has to know you had to get down on your knees and grovel and snivel in desperation for some help. No sense in alarming everyone by announcing a state of alarm, you’re right there. It really put the shits up them last time. …

PC1 is Ávila, with a huge clincher clue in the last sentence, “walled up …”, a reference to the 11th century defensive wall and towers around the city standing some 12 metres tall, and still in pretty good nick since the high Middle Ages. Particularly impressive when you see it all lit up at night, fully visible from a considerable distance.

To Lie in Madrid

PC2 is Soria, and that poet who wasn’t a local lad but who nevertheless done good, Antonio Machado, originally from Sevilla.

Sep 24

All I can say is well done to the thousands upon thousands upon thousands of contestants who sent in postcards in the unlikely hope of a Spanish freebie, but unfortunately the gig is null and void and you’ve wasted the price of the postcard, the price of the postage, and the price of your time. Don’t blame me, blame the management, even though I’ve been asked to remind you on its behalf that “management accepts no liability and/or responsibility and/or culpability whatsoever, wheresoever and indeed whysoever for any direct and/or indirect losses and/or damages and/or legal fees whichsoever and/or whensoever”.

Yesterday’s news was full of uncertainty. Think to yourselves in your respective languages, by the way – how many times in the last five years has that word “uncertainty” popped up in your translations, especially financial translations?

Thank God it's over, I say.

It used to be in reference to Brexit and/or Trump’s election, and by extension the economic prospects with or without either of them, and after 2016 it was just the economy, waiting for one of the main actors to sneeze, or not sneeze, to get an idea of which way our economic health was going to go. Sneezes have become sadly relevant since March, and now the uncertainty is the economic side of things, dragged mercilessly along by Covid.

Antonio Machado

Meanwhile, Madrid has been carved up into safe and unsafe zones, and some 27 dubious areas were initially singled out for a kind of, well, special treatment, with certain travel restrictions. Not confinement, you understand, because that’s a dirty word. Just that people can’t go anywhere without permish. Rather uneven, too, the singling out, which poses a few problems, because some people can’t go to a chemist’s, a bar, a shop on the other side of a road because it’s in one of those special areas. And the special areas are mostly in the poorest areas of southern Madrid.

Many thanks, Mervyn!

Luckily, those in southern Madrid are still allowed to take the dangerously crowded metro and the dangerously crowded buses through the dangerously crowded streets, to work cleaning offices and toilets, taking care of children and the elderly, and working in bars and restaurants and menial tasks various in safer areas, mostly in the more affluent centre and north. I don't know much about north-south Madrid, but that's what I'm told.

I did not know this Spanish poet. As a big fan of poetry, this weekend I know for sure where I go to find his books!

But apparently that’s just a coincidence, as Ms Isabel was quick to point out. There is no difference between the north and the south, she said, now come on, get real. In fact, she hasn’t ruled out additions to those special areas. Maybe it’s just me, but whenever politicians say they “can’t rule something out”, I automatically assume that something is about to be ruled in pronto.

To Die in Madrid

The intrepid President of Madrid’s regional government went further to explain herself. Apparently Madrid belongs to everyone. Madrid is Spain within Spain. What is Madrid if it is not Spain?

Sep 18

It does not belong to anyone, because it belongs to everyone. That four-sentence mouthful’s a real quote, too. See if you can figure it out where you are, because I’m still scratching my head here.

What a to-do. A long time ago I mentioned the wringing of hands, the renting of clothes, the tearing of hair and the gnashing of teeth from certain parts of the country, amid outraged cries at what they called a virtual coup d’état imposed on the nation by PM Sánchez, who was apparently gripping the Reins of State so tightly that Spain’s autonomous regions had no say in anything at all.

What did you do during the crises, daddy?

Especially from Madrid, where the region is not governed by Mr S’s party, but by the Partido Popular, led by President Díaz Ayuso. It’s not a political viewpoint, but I find Ms Isabel frankly disturbing. It’s those come-to-death eyes of hers, I think. Anyway, Sánchez put up with the moaning for a while, and when things had relaxed slightly, he said, “OK, fine, you win, all the autonomous communities can handle their own Covid affairs from now on.” After a few rounds of the usual grumpy, huffy “About time, too”-ing, the communities happily set to work to govern their own affairs. …

Sep 28

Guess what?

“Daddy was a bank robber,” warbled a punk rocker called Joe Strummer. Neither of those statements is true. Unsurprisingly, his real surname wasn’t Strummer. Nor was he christened Joe, for that matter. And daddy wasn’t a bank robber, and evidently his surname wasn’t Strummer either. You don’t get to be Second Secretary in the British Foreign Service with a surname like Strummer - unless it’s a slightly more plausible “Fitzwilliam-Strummer”, for example - and certainly not with a former career holding a shotgun to bank managers' heads while they fill up the holdalls with grand after grand from their vaults. Be serious.

Yes, Madrid now has the same number of Covid patients in intensive care as it had in May, and the ICUs are close to breaking point. Contagion is on the up and up, and Old Mr Death is popping by much more often again. Plus, all that erstwhile hero worship of the health care fraternity/sorority seems to be on the wane. A nurse was on TV last night, reporting that the hospital was being subjected to a daily round of foul-mouthed abuse by the great unwashed trying to get in. The same thing is happening to social security offices, where you have to queue for hours to sort out mum’s pension or your unemployment benefit because the Internet option simply doesn’t work, phone pressure has led to them posting a pay number for queries, add to this the pupils and teachers all streaming back to the schools and people going back to work, and all in all they’re already talking about locking down the capital again.

But it damages your son’s street cred in a garage band like The Clash if he’s one of those Angry Young Men people talk about in the newspapers who associate with other undesirable elements called Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious, not to mention all-female groups called The Slits, and that kind of thing gets out while he’s smashing up a guitar on stage or smashing up the establishment in his lyrics, or smashing up himself backstage before a gig at the Hammersmith Palais. Band member Mick Jones admitted years later “I was so into speed – I mean, I don’t even remember MAKING the first album!”

Except they aren’t using the dreaded L Word. Not yet, anyway. The words “restrictions”, “certain problematic areas” and “occasional emergencies” sound much more effective, friendly and reassuring, and less desperate, doom-ridden and gloomy.

So he kept those origins quiet. For most of his childhood Joe, born in Ankara, and his brother, were packed off to English boarding school with a load of upper-class twits. Not that he reaped many of the advantages of a privileged background beyond that, seeing very little of ma and pa, and largely left to his own devices. Difficult times for John Graham Mellor in the years before he metamorphosed into Joe Strummer. There were some very poignant moments, in fact, like having to identify his brother David’s corpse after he killed himself at 19 and wasn’t found until a few days later, because the parents weren’t around to go down to the morgue. Yes, he kept quiet and just railed against it all in his songs later on. Catch the bitterness and hatred and loneliness in that rasping breathy voice.

That coup situation is looking more attractive by the day.

So what’s my point?

Meanwhile ...

My point is that a lot of people lie about their parents. My own dad signed up for the Korean War, was taken prisoner, and escaped one night by crawling half a mile through a sewage tunnel after spending six months breaking through to it by scraping a hole with a small rock pick in his cell wall, cunningly hidden behind a huge poster of Rita Hayworth, and … see what I mean?

Meanwhile, it’s always useful to have a scapegoat. Possibly hategoat might be a better word, if I can use that one. Yes, why not, a hategoat, someone to hate, a decoy, because hatred is forever, unlike love.

People lie about their parents. Happens all the time. At a pinch you’d probably have believed me if I hadn’t started in with the screenplay from The Shawshank Redemption.

And who better than a Royal?

When the glamorous pouting Corinna Larsen started spilling all the sleaze about her one-time beau Juan Carlos and allegations of his millions stashed away in Swiss bank accounts while Spain and just about everywhere else were busy descending into financial chaos, over here our first thoughts were, All that money amid a worldwide financial crisis. Hmm, so what about his son Felipe, who took over the throne?

Despite the ruling socialist party’s best efforts to play down the shenanigans of Rex Emeritus. Yes, you read that right. You might think that lefties would be quick to jump on any untoward goings-on by the regals, but not here. The socialists have been operating a “you-scratch-my-back-I’ll-scratch-yours” policy with the Palace People since they found in the mid-80s that power was quite nice, and they wanted to hang on to it, and if that meant letting Juanca do da mess-around wherever and whenever he wanted in exchange, then so be it.

Did he know about all this?

No, in this country it’s the right wing that secretly despises the royals much more. In public it’s all jingoistic lip-service, but in private they think the monarchy has too many privileges for too little work, and doesn’t deserve its status.

How could he not have?

A juicy tale is now unfolding about what journalists like to call the “sewers of the state”, too complicated to go into until next time, but suffice it to say that it’s a tale of Swiss bank accounts creaking with illicit dosh, the terrible revenge of a woman who would be queen scorned, veiled threats against her by the Spanish secret service, and a photo of an ex-rex in his seventies cooking up burgers on a barbie in shorts and a baseball cap on back to front, while the femme fatale’s kid looks on.

Of course not. How dare you, sir. What's the matter with you?

I hope Old Mr. Death or Old Mrs. Infection don't go up again

Where's your patriotism?

We are all in the same boat. Our Prime Minister, Mr. "Toninho" Costa is saying we will reach a high number of cases and deaths in the coming month.

Not that he said as much, though. Kings and queens don’t actually deign to reply to that kind of murmuring, aghast, open-mouthed, indignantly denying any knowledge. No, what they do is issue a statement, and King F’s immediately distanced his royal self from any such shameful behaviour. In fact, he went further and announced he was waiving his right to inherit any ill-gotten gains dad might have salted away somewhere (Tom, in this case I’m afraid you have to concede the use of “gotten” – ill-got gains just doesn’t cut it). Note the language. Just the “ill-gotten gains”. Other gains are all right, presumably. But I wouldn’t like to have the job of figuring out which are which, the ill-gotten and the well-gotten. Then again, when the time comes, I’m not going to be asked to do it, am I. Maybe nobody else will be asked either.

Correction: "... in the coming week"!

Hopefully Ms Larsen will be quietly let off the hook in London in exchange for keeping the rest of the dirt to herself, and it’ll all blow over. Like that coronavirus thing was blowing over. But oh, then it blew back, just like that. Especially down there in the capital, where it seems to be thriving on all the squabbling. "To Sigh in Madrid", coming soon to a thread near you.

Bourbon shot

Have a heart

Sep 19

A long time ago I read an English-language article about a Spaniard whose car had broken down on a hot day in the middle of nowhere around the end of the 70s, and a man whizzing by on a motorbike stopped to help. This hearty Good Samaritan heartily told him to jump on, and took him to the nearest garage in all heartiness. It was only when the biker took off his helmet to mop his brow that the other chap realised the benefactor was none other than his own country’s king, Juan Carlos I.

No, I don’t mean the famous drink, but rather the Borbón dynasty now ruling over the Spanish realm, which the Anglos call the Bourbons. There may well be a connection between them and the drink somewhere, but I’m unaware of it. Although the chattering classes do say that Juan Carlos’s red-hot chat-up line to distant relation and future wife Sofía when they met at the Duke of Kent’s 1961 wedding in York was “Fancy a Bourbon, love?”. Well, no, I must confess I made that one up ...

You’ll have noticed the emphasis on heartiness. I didn’t use it gratuitously. They have an adjective in Spanish, “campechano”, which for years I’ve noticed was the adjective most frequently used to describe Juan Carlos in his public appearances out and about pressing the flesh. That, or the corresponding noun, “campechanería”, the heartiness permanently ascribed to the man, along with the word “usual”, “constant”, “general”, “accustomed”, “habitual”, “eternal” etc. Not your dour monarch solemnly offering his ring to be kissed by the scruffy forelock-tugging plebs (… the ring on his finger, on his finger, settle down now). So that first paragraph is a good example of JC’s reputation for heartiness.

It’s been a mixed bag for JC over the years – years of uncertainty before he was allowed to become king by an ageing despot, years of tension when he eventually did, amid rumours of unrest among a disgruntled military in the post-Franco period, and even a real coup in 1981, the glory years as Saviour of the Nation and King of All Spaniards afterwards, and finally an inglorious descent into years of disgrace and abdication, and more disgrace even after that. And why?

Heartiness hung well with all that freshness-of-youth thing in the early days, but even when the physical fraîcheur began to fade as it lumbered into middle age and plodded unsteadily beyond it, heartiness was still the keynote to Juanca’s affairs. By affairs I mean the business of being king, of course, but one can safely assume he was heartily hearty in affairs of the heart too. Anyway, I’ve rarely seen these expressions used for anyone else, and definitely not other monarchs. In any case it would be hard to imagine it being used to describe the Queen of England, for instance, either in her youth or nowadays. Maybe it’s because Liz never had much time for heartiness and focused more on stateliness. As well she might. I mean, that’s what they pay her for, isn’t it?

Women and money, money and women. “Couldn’t keep his hands off the kitty, or off the titty either,” tattle those in the know. Same old same old.

But Juanca’s not so hearty these days. Downhearted and heartbroken, more like. In heart-to-hearts with his closest buddies, he’s eating his heart out. The word is he’s not enjoying life in that mysterious exile in Saudi Arabia, and he misses Spain. His heart’s not in it. I’ll bet. Over there he’s forking out 6,000 yucks a night at an undisclosed hotel. We’re told it’s him that’s forking it out, anyway, not his former subjects. As well he might. I mean, that’s not what they pay him for, is it?

The initial years were marked by tragedy. No two ways about it – accidentally killing your brother is rarely good for PR. A fateful tale, which is nevertheless played down a lot, understandably. He was just lucky it happened when the 18-year old JC and his family were holidaying down in Estoril at Easter.

But no forking into Galician octopus, scallops, lobster, bream or angler fish at Sanxenxo, one of the fave regal haunts in the old days. Because you soon tire of lamb this, lamb that, lamb the other, lamb surprise, and lamb on lamb over in Riyadh.

In any other circumstances there would have been an investigation, but I assume since Salazar of Portugal was besties with Franco, who was just starting to groom Juanca for after his demise, being wily enough to pass over his old fox of a father, the Count of Barcelona, who had been hovering in the wings for years waiting for his daddy's throne back, it went no further than a tragic accident. An accident that led to an in-joke ditty often recited among the regal classes of Europe and beyond – “Two little royals, playing with a gun, it went off by accident, and then there was one.” Well, no, I made that one up too. But I know you believed it for a couple of milliseconds ...

And you thought it was the British who were obsessed with tea. At least the British only have a fixation on afternoon tea, but over there it’s tea in the morning, tea in the afternoon, tea in the evening, tea at all hours. Tea?

… Other than that it had been a normal day for his younger brother Alfonso, and he'd even won a golf tournament that very morning. There are several versions of the event: Juanca said he didn't know the gun was loaded, and his sis said their 15-year old bruv was carrying some eats into their room - since his hands were full he pushed open the door with his shoulder, and thus a little too brusquely. Juanca was inside next to the door, standing there examining the gun ...

There’s nothing hearty about tea, is there?

Some of the more irresponsible chroniclers have gone so far as to venture that “lying in wait” would be a more accurate description, but you know how people gossip about royals and their jealousies and hatreds. Just cast your mind back to all the conspiracy theories about Diana and Dodi in that tunnel. Ridiculous, wasn’t it?

All you can do is slurp it back half-heartedly, pondering with heavy heart on your heartrending lot, while in your King of Hearts’ heart of hearts you yearn to be back in the Rías Baixas, washing all that tasty fish and seafood down with some chilled Albariño, and maybe a few orujo shot glasses later as you cackle at cards with your moneyed mates watching the sun go down on deck in the yacht moored out in the Atlantic. It’s heartless. But at Saudi prices at least a condemned man can eat a hearty breakfast.

Of course it was. When everyone knows the traffic’s murder in Paris. And the whisperers are still whispering these days, too, oh my, yes, because that kind of thing never goes away, does it?

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page32.html

Look at the knives being taken out and gleefully sharpened for Meghan Markle, for instance.

Local time: 23:49

But I digress. Anyway, what happened in Estoril was that the door hit JC’s arm unexpectedly, and Bang, you’re dead. But like I say, many of the details were hushed up because no inquiry was held. For example, to this very day no one knows whether or not the runner-up in the tournament was awarded the cup instead.

Tax brake

Some outrageous analysts even came up with a hugely far-fetched Second-Shooter Theory, on the grounds that the large bay window of the room was open, and that an elevated “grassy knoll” outside would have had a perfect line of vision for a rifle-toting teenager incensed after losing to young Alfonso out on the links, and scheming with Juanca to extract a terrible 19th hole revenge in exchange for the additional long-term incentive of elephant-hunting freebies and compliant Northern European aristocratesses when JC eventually clinched the throne. One gun might miss, but two make it a dead cert. When these people asked the Palace to comment, they apparently came up against a stone wall, which only served to heighten their suspicions of an omertà cover-up.

Sep 29

To Vie in Madrid

This year, like all taxpayers here, I am privileged to present the government (or rather, the Provincial Council’s tax department) with the usual pound of flesh on my toils in 2019 by tomorrow, 30 September, instead of the usual July payment.

Sep 22

They took pity on us in these corona times.

There follows a secret recording of yesterday’s all-important meeting between Pedro Sánchez and Isabel Díaz Ayuso in Madrid. To keep things simple, the two speakers are KiSA (Knight in Shining Armour) and PoD (Princess of Darkness):

The swag is now ready and waiting in my account for the taxman to throw into his big bad bag, but I can’t help thinking there’s something rotten in the state of the world when I’m paying X times more in tax than the President of the United States.

Scene: a room in Casa de Correos, Puerta del Sol, with black candles burning all around. Huge upside-down cross on wall behind desk. Eery chanting music in background.

And I don’t own one measly golf course or a luxury hotel, or even a B&B.

KiSA (peering around in the gloom): Wow, not much light in here, is there?

Somebody said to me yesterday, “Well, that’s it, he’ll never win a second term now.”

Could we roll down all those blinds and open some of the shutters?

I’m not so sure.

PoD: No, we can’t, I’m afraid. I’m, er, allergic to direct sunlight. That's why I'm so pale.

Sitting over here in Bilbao, I simply can’t help feeling a kind of horrific, twisted admiration for the man, so over there in places like the Midwest, where people who don't usually count apparently count even more, it must be so much more up close and personal.

KiSA: Thanks for calling me to this meeting to help you. I just want to know how I can help. That’s what I’ve come to do, to help, you see. There’s nothing wrong with asking for help, you know. Nobody’s going to laugh. All you have to do is admit you can’t cope, and simply ask for help. I certainly won’t be levelling any accusations at you because you aren’t doing your job properly, and that’s why you’re in this mess. I’d just like to make that clear. All I want to do is help, and I can assure you I haven’t come to gloat and make you sorry you kept asking me months ago to decentralise and let you bring off a miserable, pathetic failure all on your own. So, when do you want me to declare a state of alarm in Madrid?

Think of all the lies he’s told and all the tricky situations he’s got out of up to now, and they’re still rooting for him. Why should this one be any different?

PoD: I don’t want you to declare a state of alarm in Madrid, because that means it’s me that really does need help. But I also wish to thank you for calling me to this meeting to help you, our beautiful capital and seat of government, and Spaniards everywhere, because Madrid is Spain, and Spain is Madrid. But at the moment I can’t help you because we have no doctors or nurses in Madrid. And we have no doctors or nurses because you didn’t allow me to pay them enough, and now they’ve all gone off to work in the UK.

It’s a cinch, really, because you have your line of defence all good to go:

KiSA: What's that got to do with it?

You have losses, so you ask how can I pay taxes if I’m expected to keep the economy going?

So, how about declaring a state of alarm in Madrid?

You have profits, so you ask why should I pay taxes to offset all the losers with failed businesses if I’m expected to keep the economy going?

PoD: No, no state of alarm, please. And the UK is a smaller country, although it has a larger population. And even larger now with all those Spanish doctors and nurses. And the population of its capital is much larger than Madrid’s. I know. I was there on Erasmus.

When the heat gets turned up, you turn your attention to Sleepy Joe’s son, and trash him along with anyone else you can think of.

KiSA: So what?

When the writing’s on the wall and they start asking too many questions, you cry Fifth Amendment.

What do you mean by all that?

And when you’re really on the brink of the precipice, you say I’m the President of the United States of America, for Chrissakes. Easy as pie. Apple pie.

Maybe they need a state of alarm too. Like you.

Good ole' apple pie, baked by momma out in the Rust Belt, in the Real America, the Hardworking America, the Americans’ America.

PoD: I’m not entirely sure what I mean, but as a politician it certainly proves my point, don’t you think?

Let’s bake American greats again.

KiSA: So what do you want me to do?

To Cry in Madrid

I’m here to help, remember, not to criticise or find fault or expound on defects, flaws, mistakes, gross underestimations, gross overconfidence, gross incompetence, gross arrogance, gross miscalculations, errors of premise or hypothesis. Only to help. Just tell me when you want me to announce a state of alarm in Madrid, and I’ll do it, take over the whole shooting match, like I did before, things will soon calm down, you’ll see, all this will just be a bad memory for you, and you won’t need to do anything. Except maybe find a job, because you might not last very long in this one, considering all the murmuring in your own party.

Sep 30

PoD: What I need is a plan.

Cry is right.

KiSA: A plan?

Too right.

Well, why didn’t you say so in the first place?

The people of Madrid are crying foul.

I’ll go straight back to Moncloa and have a long chat with my advisers in the gardens to draw up a plan to announce a state of alarm. I suggest you go back to your huge hotel room and wait for me to send you my state of alarm plan.

Demos and protests starting in.

PoD: Please stop talking about a state of alarm. And I can’t go back out there until the sun goes down, I mean I will be working tirelessly here until dead of night for all the people of Madrid and all the people of Spain. I’m glad I was able to help you with your problem.

The thing is, they’re not at all sure who they’re crying foul about. Is it the local government or the central government?

KiSA: And I’m glad I was able to help you with your problem. We can call the plan the Non-State of Alarm Plan if you like. That means I won’t actually announce a state of alarm, but we’ll enact a state of alarm in secret anyway without calling it that, and no one has to know you had to get down on your knees and grovel and snivel in desperation for some help. No sense in alarming everyone by announcing a state of alarm, you’re right there. It really put the shits up them last time. …

Who knows?

To Lie in Madrid

All they know is that another 8 areas have been added to the 37 already earmarked for special watch (not 27 – I got that wrong last time), but a few more might well have been added by the time I’ve posted this.

Sep 24

It’s touch and go as the nation holds its breath to find out, er, who’s in charge around here.

Yesterday’s news was full of uncertainty. Think to yourselves in your respective languages, by the way – how many times in the last five years has that word “uncertainty” popped up in your translations, especially financial translations?

The man wheeled in to act as the local “Covid 19” spokesman in Madrid resigned after only two days.

It used to be in reference to Brexit and/or Trump’s election, and by extension the economic prospects with or without either of them, and after 2016 it was just the economy, waiting for one of the main actors to sneeze, or not sneeze, to get an idea of which way our economic health was going to go. Sneezes have become sadly relevant since March, and now the uncertainty is the economic side of things, dragged mercilessly along by Covid.

Can’t say I blame him. Blame. Now there’s a word that’s even bigger than “virus” these days.

Meanwhile, Madrid has been carved up into safe and unsafe zones, and some 27 dubious areas were initially singled out for a kind of, well, special treatment, with certain travel restrictions. Not confinement, you understand, because that’s a dirty word. Just that people can’t go anywhere without permish. Rather uneven, too, the singling out, which poses a few problems, because some people can’t go to a chemist’s, a bar, a shop on the other side of a road because it’s in one of those special areas. And the special areas are mostly in the poorest areas of southern Madrid.

The PM blames the regional government for not taking effective action, and the regional government blames the PM for not helping out.

Luckily, those in southern Madrid are still allowed to take the dangerously crowded metro and the dangerously crowded buses through the dangerously crowded streets, to work cleaning offices and toilets, taking care of children and the elderly, and working in bars and restaurants and menial tasks various in safer areas, mostly in the more affluent centre and north. I don't know much about north-south Madrid, but that's what I'm told.

And don’t even bother asking the rest of the Spanish government – mild-mannered, soft-spoken Health Minister Illa is losing those mild manners and that soft speak by the day as he’s thrown into the thick of the endless going-nowhere blame-game talks between the two authorities.

But apparently that’s just a coincidence, as Ms Isabel was quick to point out. There is no difference between the north and the south, she said, now come on, get real. In fact, she hasn’t ruled out additions to those special areas. Maybe it’s just me, but whenever politicians say they “can’t rule something out”, I automatically assume that something is about to be ruled in pronto.

One of the Deputy PMs and a couple of other ministers from the militant left aren’t helping either – their blame’s veering off elsewhere, blaming King Felipe for shedding his neutrality in a phone call to a load of senior magistrates to express his regret for not attending one of their important meetings in Barcelona the other day.

The intrepid President of Madrid’s regional government went further to explain herself. Apparently Madrid belongs to everyone. Madrid is Spain within Spain. What is Madrid if it is not Spain?

Felipe wanted to be there, but it seems the government wouldn’t let him go up to Catalonia amid a lot of independentist yelling ahead of the imminent defrocking of the Catalan president for disobedience a few years ago (refusing to remove a “Free Political Prisoners” poster from the façade of the Generalitat seat of government).

It does not belong to anyone, because it belongs to everyone. That four-sentence mouthful’s a real quote, too. See if you can figure it out where you are, because I’m still scratching my head here.

You might wonder, by the way, why the Spanish government has more than one Deputy PM.

What did you do during the crises, daddy?

It’s not a new thing, and there have been up to three Deputy PMs in the past.

Sep 28

Do they need two or three?

“Daddy was a bank robber,” warbled a punk rocker called Joe Strummer. Neither of those statements is true. Unsurprisingly, his real surname wasn’t Strummer. Nor was he christened Joe, for that matter. And daddy wasn’t a bank robber, and evidently his surname wasn’t Strummer either. You don’t get to be Second Secretary in the British Foreign Service with a surname like Strummer - unless it’s a slightly more plausible “Fitzwilliam-Strummer”, for example - and certainly not with a former career holding a shotgun to bank managers' heads while they fill up the holdalls with grand after grand from their vaults. Be serious.

Naturally they don’t, but they have to create a few dummy posts to keep the minority in the coalition happy, or if not happy, at least not so unhappy.

But it damages your son’s street cred in a garage band like The Clash if he’s one of those Angry Young Men people talk about in the newspapers who associate with other undesirable elements called Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious, not to mention all-female groups called The Slits, and that kind of thing gets out while he’s smashing up a guitar on stage or smashing up the establishment in his lyrics, or smashing up himself backstage before a gig at the Hammersmith Palais. Band member Mick Jones admitted years later “I was so into speed – I mean, I don’t even remember MAKING the first album!”

If only it were just their votes the PM needs in Parliament, but no.

So he kept those origins quiet. For most of his childhood Joe, born in Ankara, and his brother, were packed off to English boarding school with a load of upper-class twits. Not that he reaped many of the advantages of a privileged background beyond that, seeing very little of ma and pa, and largely left to his own devices. Difficult times for John Graham Mellor in the years before he metamorphosed into Joe Strummer. There were some very poignant moments, in fact, like having to identify his brother David’s corpse after he killed himself at 19 and wasn’t found until a few days later, because the parents weren’t around to go down to the morgue. Yes, he kept quiet and just railed against it all in his songs later on. Catch the bitterness and hatred and loneliness in that rasping breathy voice.

With very few exceptions, Sánchez needs just about everyone’s votes!

So what’s my point?

Including those naughty Catalan nationalists and those naughty Basque nationalists, and also the votes of the even naughtier Basque nationalists.

My point is that a lot of people lie about their parents. My own dad signed up for the Korean War, was taken prisoner, and escaped one night by crawling half a mile through a sewage tunnel after spending six months breaking through to it by scraping a hole with a small rock pick in his cell wall, cunningly hidden behind a huge poster of Rita Hayworth, and … see what I mean?

You can imagine how the spat about the King and the reliance on parties who don’t want their people to form part of Spain sit with the right wing, and let's not forget the even naughtier right wing.

People lie about their parents. Happens all the time. At a pinch you’d probably have believed me if I hadn’t started in with the screenplay from The Shawshank Redemption.

So you can also imagine how little time everyone involved has to address the urgent matter of Covid.

When the glamorous pouting Corinna Larsen started spilling all the sleaze about her one-time beau Juan Carlos and allegations of his millions stashed away in Swiss bank accounts while Spain and just about everywhere else were busy descending into financial chaos, over here our first thoughts were, All that money amid a worldwide financial crisis. Hmm, so what about his son Felipe, who took over the throne?

And you can definitely imagine what the people of Madrid think about it all.

Did he know about all this?

To Cry in Madrid (II) - Stop press

How could he not have?

Didn't see the late night news and hadn't read the paper this morning either due to work, so I missed the latest.

Of course not. How dare you, sir. What's the matter with you?

Turns out the playground tantrums finally led to an agreement, and as of tomorrow or Friday almost 5 million people in Madrid will be going into lockdown (apparently they finally used the L word).

Where's your patriotism?

Will it work?

Not that he said as much, though. Kings and queens don’t actually deign to reply to that kind of murmuring, aghast, open-mouthed, indignantly denying any knowledge. No, what they do is issue a statement, and King F’s immediately distanced his royal self from any such shameful behaviour. In fact, he went further and announced he was waiving his right to inherit any ill-gotten gains dad might have salted away somewhere (Tom, in this case I’m afraid you have to concede the use of “gotten” – ill-got gains just doesn’t cut it). Note the language. Just the “ill-gotten gains”. Other gains are all right, presumably. But I wouldn’t like to have the job of figuring out which are which, the ill-gotten and the well-gotten. Then again, when the time comes, I’m not going to be asked to do it, am I. Maybe nobody else will be asked either.

Of course it'll work.

What could possibly go wrong?

Hopefully Ms Larsen will be quietly let off the hook in London in exchange for keeping the rest of the dirt to herself, and it’ll all blow over. Like that coronavirus thing was blowing over. But oh, then it blew back, just like that. Especially down there in the capital, where it seems to be thriving on all the squabbling. "To Sigh in Madrid", coming soon to a thread near you.

Have a heart

(2015)

A partial lockdown, no?

A long time ago I read an English-language article about a Spaniard whose car had broken down on a hot day in the middle of nowhere around the end of the 70s, and a man whizzing by on a motorbike stopped to help. This hearty Good Samaritan heartily told him to jump on, and took him to the nearest garage in all heartiness. It was only when the biker took off his helmet to mop his brow that the other chap realised the benefactor was none other than his own country’s king, Juan Carlos I.

You’ll have noticed the emphasis on heartiness. I didn’t use it gratuitously. They have an adjective in Spanish, “campechano”, which for years I’ve noticed was the adjective most frequently used to describe Juan Carlos in his public appearances out and about pressing the flesh. That, or the corresponding noun, “campechanería”, the heartiness permanently ascribed to the man, along with the word “usual”, “constant”, “general”, “accustomed”, “habitual”, “eternal” etc. Not your dour monarch solemnly offering his ring to be kissed by the scruffy forelock-tugging plebs (… the ring on his finger, on his finger, settle down now). So that first paragraph is a good example of JC’s reputation for heartiness.

Oct 1

Heartiness hung well with all that freshness-of-youth thing in the early days, but even when the physical fraîcheur began to fade as it lumbered into middle age and plodded unsteadily beyond it, heartiness was still the keynote to Juanca’s affairs. By affairs I mean the business of being king, of course, but one can safely assume he was heartily hearty in affairs of the heart too. Anyway, I’ve rarely seen these expressions used for anyone else, and definitely not other monarchs. In any case it would be hard to imagine it being used to describe the Queen of England, for instance, either in her youth or nowadays. Maybe it’s because Liz never had much time for heartiness and focused more on stateliness. As well she might. I mean, that’s what they pay her for, isn’t it?

Today I read that Spanish Government ordered a partial lockdown in the capital, and surrounding areas affected by Covid-19 after the rise in cases. I do not know if it works.

Here the cases are increasing again, despite so many restrictions.

But Juanca’s not so hearty these days. Downhearted and heartbroken, more like. In heart-to-hearts with his closest buddies, he’s eating his heart out. The word is he’s not enjoying life in that mysterious exile in Saudi Arabia, and he misses Spain. His heart’s not in it. I’ll bet. Over there he’s forking out 6,000 yucks a night at an undisclosed hotel. We’re told it’s him that’s forking it out, anyway, not his former subjects. As well he might. I mean, that’s not what they pay him for, is it?

But no forking into Galician octopus, scallops, lobster, bream or angler fish at Sanxenxo, one of the fave regal haunts in the old days. Because you soon tire of lamb this, lamb that, lamb the other, lamb surprise, and lamb on lamb over in Riyadh.

Our PM says it is not sustainable in economic and social terms to face a second confinement, but after 14th October we will see that...

Since this "thing" has appeared, I am always hoping for the best and preparing myself for the worst.

And you thought it was the British who were obsessed with tea. At least the British only have a fixation on afternoon tea, but over there it’s tea in the morning, tea in the afternoon, tea in the evening, tea at all hours. Tea?

Also, sometimes I think political measures or decisions can be as deadly as Covid-19. I am still confident, and I do not get discouraged easily.

There’s nothing hearty about tea, is there?

Yes, partial

All you can do is slurp it back half-heartedly, pondering with heavy heart on your heartrending lot, while in your King of Hearts’ heart of hearts you yearn to be back in the Rías Baixas, washing all that tasty fish and seafood down with some chilled Albariño, and maybe a few orujo shot glasses later as you cackle at cards with your moneyed mates watching the sun go down on deck in the yacht moored out in the Atlantic. It’s heartless. But at Saudi prices at least a condemned man can eat a hearty breakfast.

A partial lockdown means that you can still go out at any time you like, which none of us could do in March/April, but no groups of more than 6, I think it is, no shops, bars or restaurants open after 10 pm, and no travel between safe/unsafe areas - for want of better words - without good reason, and documents to prove it.

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page32.html

Local time: 23:49

And no travel to those parts of Madrid either from outside, unless you're passing through.

They have checkpoints in a lot of streets. Sounds like a nightmare for the police to enforce.

Tax brake

Sep 29

They're also using the army for certain operations, mostly logistics and so on.

This year, like all taxpayers here, I am privileged to present the government (or rather, the Provincial Council’s tax department) with the usual pound of flesh on my toils in 2019 by tomorrow, 30 September, instead of the usual July payment.

Me, I'd have had that lot in from the very start - without the uniforms, because that makes people nervous - after all, they're not doing much else, are they?

They took pity on us in these corona times.

I mean, Spain's not at war with anyone, is it?

So they might as well make themselves useful and earn the pay they're getting anyway instead of lying around on their bunks in the barracks and marching around and saluting each other all day long.

The swag is now ready and waiting in my account for the taxman to throw into his big bad bag, but I can’t help thinking there’s something rotten in the state of the world when I’m paying X times more in tax than the President of the United States.

Food is the key

And I don’t own one measly golf course or a luxury hotel, or even a B&B.

Somebody said to me yesterday, “Well, that’s it, he’ll never win a second term now.”

I believe you need to bring back your Friday popular recipes to delight our taste buds and to lift our spirit again.

I’m not so sure.

No partial or full lockdowns will ruin that.

Sitting over here in Bilbao, I simply can’t help feeling a kind of horrific, twisted admiration for the man, so over there in places like the Midwest, where people who don't usually count apparently count even more, it must be so much more up close and personal.

Viva Hooky Street

Think of all the lies he’s told and all the tricky situations he’s got out of up to now, and they’re still rooting for him. Why should this one be any different?

Oct 2

A couple of twists this week in the Spanish courts.

It’s a cinch, really, because you have your line of defence all good to go:

You have losses, so you ask how can I pay taxes if I’m expected to keep the economy going?

All the former suits at Bankia were acquitted of charges of creative accounting and misuse of funds, when the bank carried off its public listing years ago, but Bankia didn’t last very long, and had to be bailed out after they found a rather large hole in the numbers.

You have profits, so you ask why should I pay taxes to offset all the losers with failed businesses if I’m expected to keep the economy going?

The IPO had been cleared by the Bank of Spain, they said.

When the heat gets turned up, you turn your attention to Sleepy Joe’s son, and trash him along with anyone else you can think of.

And it had, which makes you wonder.

When the writing’s on the wall and they start asking too many questions, you cry Fifth Amendment.

Anyway, the white-collar wide boys included former chairman at the bank, Rodrigo Rato, but in his case it merely meant he stayed in prison anyway, because he was already halfway into a stretch of four and a half years for the “black card” affair at Bankia.

And when you’re really on the brink of the precipice, you say I’m the President of the United States of America, for Chrissakes. Easy as pie. Apple pie.

But yesterday, a few days after the verdict, it was announced Rodders gets to go back home with an electronic tag, on account of his age (71), health, and the fact that he had shown remorse (and gave back some of the dosh).

Good ole' apple pie, baked by momma out in the Rust Belt, in the Real America, the Hardworking America, the Americans’ America.

The black card thing was that early on Bankia’s top brass were all issued with the bank’s plastic, and they put it to good use – restaurants, gifts, holidays, whatever, or simply cash withdrawals to the daily limit.

Let’s bake American greats again.

Only one of them refused to use it, saying it was immoral and risky.

None of the others in C-Suite, apparently, ever realised that this was tax evasion, because nobody declared nowt, or that the totally unnecessary and unjustifiable expenses constituted theft from the company.

To Cry in Madrid

Sep 30

Some said they “just thought it was extra pay” (and you can imagine they weren’t earning a pittance), and incredibly Rato (the Chairman, remember) said he wasn’t sure of the details, because the CFO took care of that kind of thing.

Me, I’d expect the man running the show to be aware of the details, otherwise what’s the point of him running it?

Cry is right.

Too right.

Especially since Wodney had more than a bit of form in economic issues.

The people of Madrid are crying foul.

He was one of those Deputy PMs I was talking about recently, and Finance and Treasury Minister too when José María Aznar’s Partido Popular was in power in the early noughties, in those heady days when Spain and everywhere were busy building up their impossible bubble.

He also had a spell as MD of the IMF in Washington after that from 2004 to 2007, but didn’t like it much and resigned early.

Demos and protests starting in.

Never saw the Lehman Brothers thing coming just around the corner, but then neither did his replacement Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who also ended up in jail for a while.

The thing is, they’re not at all sure who they’re crying foul about. Is it the local government or the central government?

Perhaps both of them had their mind on other things.

Who knows?

All they know is that another 8 areas have been added to the 37 already earmarked for special watch (not 27 – I got that wrong last time), but a few more might well have been added by the time I’ve posted this.

What is it about Managing Directors of the IMF and trousers?

DSK couldn’t stop dropping his, Rodders couldn’t stop trousering other people’s money, and Christine Lagarde couldn't stop her friend Bernard pocketing over 400 million even before she got to the post.

It’s touch and go as the nation holds its breath to find out, er, who’s in charge around here.

The man wheeled in to act as the local “Covid 19” spokesman in Madrid resigned after only two days.

Keep an eye on that Georgieva lady, who's wearing the trousers now at the IMF.

Can’t say I blame him. Blame. Now there’s a word that’s even bigger than “virus” these days.

Tax brake II Oct 2

And, just to finish off the week:

The PM blames the regional government for not taking effective action, and the regional government blames the PM for not helping out.

And don’t even bother asking the rest of the Spanish government – mild-mannered, soft-spoken Health Minister Illa is losing those mild manners and that soft speak by the day as he’s thrown into the thick of the endless going-nowhere blame-game talks between the two authorities.

“Tax brake I” a few posts ago reminded me of a slightly scandalous anecdote from many years ago.

One of the Deputy PMs and a couple of other ministers from the militant left aren’t helping either – their blame’s veering off elsewhere, blaming King Felipe for shedding his neutrality in a phone call to a load of senior magistrates to express his regret for not attending one of their important meetings in Barcelona the other day.

I was translating at all hours for an agency in a certain Spanish city which was well in with the political party that had had a majority for yonks in the regional government, the town hall, the provincial council, and all the rest of it.

The owner of the agency was family to some big wheel in the party.

Felipe wanted to be there, but it seems the government wouldn’t let him go up to Catalonia amid a lot of independentist yelling ahead of the imminent defrocking of the Catalan president for disobedience a few years ago (refusing to remove a “Free Political Prisoners” poster from the façade of the Generalitat seat of government).

Every month I clocked up endless jobs for all those organisations, plus The Party itself, and every month I sent the agency an invoice plus VAT and minus income tax.

You might wonder, by the way, why the Spanish government has more than one Deputy PM.

It’s not a new thing, and there have been up to three Deputy PMs in the past.

One day the agency rang to tell me they were asking all their translators with considerable turnovers that month to, well, not put in any tax at all, just present the number of words and the rates and multiply, and that’s what I would receive, and in cash, too, at their office, not by cheque or transfer.

Do they need two or three?

To my shame, I said Fine (I had never done this before, and have never done it since, for that matter), and wrote up the invoice at the end of the month as usual, minus the additions and deductions.

It was then I noticed all the items, which were 99% all those public entities. I rang the agency, and said, “Isn’t this a little too flagrant, a little obvious, a little risky?

Naturally they don’t, but they have to create a few dummy posts to keep the minority in the coalition happy, or if not happy, at least not so unhappy.

I mean, all this is public stuff, you know. They’re bound to notice.”

If only it were just their votes the PM needs in Parliament, but no.

With very few exceptions, Sánchez needs just about everyone’s votes!

It still hadn’t clicked with me.

Including those naughty Catalan nationalists and those naughty Basque nationalists, and also the votes of the even naughtier Basque nationalists.

There was a slight pause, and the lady said, rather embarrassed, “Yes, but this no-tax thing wasn’t our idea, you know. It was theirs.”

Food for thought

You can imagine how the spat about the King and the reliance on parties who don’t want their people to form part of Spain sit with the right wing, and let's not forget the even naughtier right wing.

Oct 3

So you can also imagine how little time everyone involved has to address the urgent matter of Covid.

Thanks for the vote of confidence, expressisverbis, but my repertoire really isn't that extensive. I should have done more of it years ago, when I didn't have the time either.

And you can definitely imagine what the people of Madrid think about it all.

I like cooking, but not when I have to fit it in between translations.

To Cry in Madrid (II) - Stop press

Didn't see the late night news and hadn't read the paper this morning either due to work, so I missed the latest.

Even the Basques who, as everyone knows, invented food, occasionally murmur that I should put in for a cookery course.

It's just a murmur, though.

Turns out the playground tantrums finally led to an agreement, and as of tomorrow or Friday almost 5 million people in Madrid will be going into lockdown (apparently they finally used the L word).

Today I've contented myself with some fishy rice and langostinos.

Will it work?

Out at 8.30 this morning to the market for the langostinos in fearsome rain and wind, too. I'm under strict instructions from the Basques who, as everyone knows, invented fishy rice and langostinos, to make sure I fry those langostinos in garlic at the very last minute before I add them in.

Of course it'll work.

None of the amateur business of letting them cook in the hot fishy stock.

What could possibly go wrong?

(2015)

Not allowed over here. Punishable by law.

Naturally I bow to this superior knowledge.

A partial lockdown, no?

Oh, langostinos al ajillo...

Oct 1

Today I read that Spanish Government ordered a partial lockdown in the capital, and surrounding areas affected by Covid-19 after the rise in cases. I do not know if it works.

Thanks for the vote of confidence, expressisverbis, but my repertoire really isn't that extensive.

I should have done more of it years ago, when I didn't have the time either.

Here the cases are increasing again, despite so many restrictions.

Out at 8.30 this morning to the market for the langostinos in fearsome rain and wind, too.

Our PM says it is not sustainable in economic and social terms to face a second confinement, but after 14th October we will see that...

I'm under strict instructions from the Basques who, as everyone knows, invented fishy rice and langostinos, to make sure I fry those langostinos in garlic at the very last minute before I add them in.

Since this "thing" has appeared, I am always hoping for the best and preparing myself for the worst.

Also, sometimes I think political measures or decisions can be as deadly as Covid-19. I am still confident, and I do not get discouraged easily.

Not allowed over here.

Yes, partial

Punishable by law. Naturally I bow to this superior knowledge.

A partial lockdown means that you can still go out at any time you like, which none of us could do in March/April, but no groups of more than 6, I think it is, no shops, bars or restaurants open after 10 pm, and no travel between safe/unsafe areas - for want of better words - without good reason, and documents to prove it.

The garlic shrimp recipe is perfect for those who want to eat seafood but have little time to cook.

And no travel to those parts of Madrid either from outside, unless you're passing through.

I will include it in my meal plan for the coming week. I prefer eating rather than cooking, but today I made a carrot cake roll.

They have checkpoints in a lot of streets. Sounds like a nightmare for the police to enforce.

Please to not pay much attention to its look, it is a bit clumsy like me

They're also using the army for certain operations, mostly logistics and so on.

IMG\_20201003\_162817\_resized\_20201003\_042938017

Me, I'd have had that lot in from the very start - without the uniforms, because that makes people nervous - after all, they're not doing much else, are they?

Carrot cake Oct 4

I mean, Spain's not at war with anyone, is it?

Thanks again expressisverbis, for the carrot cake. Looks divine!!

So they might as well make themselves useful and earn the pay they're getting anyway instead of lying around on their bunks in the barracks and marching around and saluting each other all day long.

But...

... I made the mistake of showing it to the Basques who, as everyone knows, invented carrot cake, and they said Mm, interesting, and we'd really need to reach out to our experts for an in-depth analysis, but our initial impression is that perhaps the carrot/sponge ratio is a little too high on the carrot side.

Food is the key

They asked if I wanted the full report with graphs and refererences to ISO and the Basque Culinary Center (yes, it exists, with US spelling and all) and the rest, as usual, but I politely declined on the grounds that after all this is a "non-domestic event".

I believe you need to bring back your Friday popular recipes to delight our taste buds and to lift our spirit again.

So here today it's leftovers from yesterday, from the day before yesterday (the classic spicy red bean + chorizo stew) and a very ripe avocado that's been crying out to be processed for a few days now.

No partial or full lockdowns will ruin that.

Viva Hooky Street

I had thought of an ingenious concoction to combine all three in a daring avant-garde dish, but I copped out, I desisted on the impossible challenge, and they're all going to be served up separately and cold, cunningly disguised as Non-Guacamole with Spicy Legumes and Marinated Rice.

I can't risk a bad mark, you understand.

Oct 2

It's scary.

A couple of twists this week in the Spanish courts.

100

All the former suits at Bankia were acquitted of charges of creative accounting and misuse of funds, when the bank carried off its public listing years ago, but Bankia didn’t last very long, and had to be bailed out after they found a rather large hole in the numbers.

K Oct 4

The IPO had been cleared by the Bank of Spain, they said.

What can it all mean?

And it had, which makes you wonder.

Velká Británie

Anyway, the white-collar wide boys included former chairman at the bank, Rodrigo Rato, but in his case it merely meant he stayed in prison anyway, because he was already halfway into a stretch of four and a half years for the “black card” affair at Bankia.

švédština

But yesterday, a few days after the verdict, it was announced Rodders gets to go back home with an electronic tag, on account of his age (71), health, and the fact that he had shown remorse (and gave back some of the dosh).

No, Merv, please don’t go!

The black card thing was that early on Bankia’s top brass were all issued with the bank’s plastic, and they put it to good use – restaurants, gifts, holidays, whatever, or simply cash withdrawals to the daily limit.

Oct 4

Only one of them refused to use it, saying it was immoral and risky.

So basically you’re trying to get enough of us to chip in saying “No, Merv, please don’t go!” to take you to 100,000?

None of the others in C-Suite, apparently, ever realised that this was tax evasion, because nobody declared nowt, or that the totally unnecessary and unjustifiable expenses constituted theft from the company.

Well, I for one am not falling for that. Oldest trick in the book.

Some said they “just thought it was extra pay” (and you can imagine they weren’t earning a pittance), and incredibly Rato (the Chairman, remember) said he wasn’t sure of the details, because the CFO took care of that kind of thing.

(Or is that firing ping pong balls out of surprising places?)

Me, I’d expect the man running the show to be aware of the details, otherwise what’s the point of him running it?

No, you’re going to have to earn those final hits.

Especially since Wodney had more than a bit of form in economic issues.

After all, we’re all wondering how the Little Translator and Sergeant Garmandia have been getting on during lockdown...

He was one of those Deputy PMs I was talking about recently, and Finance and Treasury Minister too when José María Aznar’s Partido Popular was in power in the early noughties, in those heady days when Spain and everywhere were busy building up their impossible bubble.

That's ...

He also had a spell as MD of the IMF in Washington after that from 2004 to 2007, but didn’t like it much and resigned early.

... the spirit, Chris. Good for another few hits!!

Never saw the Lehman Brothers thing coming just around the corner, but then neither did his replacement Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who also ended up in jail for a while.

Every little helps.

Perhaps both of them had their mind on other things.

Alternatively, I could just hit the thing a few hundred times a day myself if I really wanted to waste my time!!

What is it about Managing Directors of the IMF and trousers?

But I don't think it's going to get there regardless.

DSK couldn’t stop dropping his, Rodders couldn’t stop trousering other people’s money, and Christine Lagarde couldn't stop her friend Bernard pocketing over 400 million even before she got to the post.

To Sigh in Madrid (fast running out of these now)

Keep an eye on that Georgieva lady, who's wearing the trousers now at the IMF.

10:03

Tax brake II Oct 2

Going back to the format I was using for most of March and April, today’s headline in the paper: “A project in deep crisis”.

And, just to finish off the week:

Yes, total despondency.

“Tax brake I” a few posts ago reminded me of a slightly scandalous anecdote from many years ago.

Loss after loss. Last but one in the league table during the crisis.

I was translating at all hours for an agency in a certain Spanish city which was well in with the political party that had had a majority for yonks in the regional government, the town hall, the provincial council, and all the rest of it.

Except this is the local paper and what they’re sighing at is Athletic Bilbao’s away loss against another Basque team, Alavés.

The owner of the agency was family to some big wheel in the party.

They also lost the previous match at home to Cádiz, hence the sombre mood.

Every month I clocked up endless jobs for all those organisations, plus The Party itself, and every month I sent the agency an invoice plus VAT and minus income tax.

I suppose it’s the same everywhere.

One day the agency rang to tell me they were asking all their translators with considerable turnovers that month to, well, not put in any tax at all, just present the number of words and the rates and multiply, and that’s what I would receive, and in cash, too, at their office, not by cheque or transfer.

When spirits are down due to the economy and the virus, the only vain hope left is the town’s own group of overpaid ball-shufflers.

To my shame, I said Fine (I had never done this before, and have never done it since, for that matter), and wrote up the invoice at the end of the month as usual, minus the additions and deductions.

What probably isn’t the same everywhere - probably, because I’m willing to stand corrected if anyone else points out the same phenomenon where they are - is that the Bilbao team has one golden rule for its players.

It was then I noticed all the items, which were 99% all those public entities. I rang the agency, and said, “Isn’t this a little too flagrant, a little obvious, a little risky?

They don’t have to be born in Bilbao, of course, but they must be Basque, or from Navarra, which is lumped in with the ancient Basque territories.

I mean, all this is public stuff, you know. They’re bound to notice.”

None of this signing up just anybody, oh no, can’t mix footie blood. Basque players born on the other side of the border are accepted too, and one of their ex-players, Bixente Lizarazu, from St Jean de Luz, now commentates on French TV, I’m told.

It still hadn’t clicked with me.

Anyway, let’s travel further south to Madrid and sneak into a teleconference to take a behind-the-scenes look at the latest online meeting between That Woman Ayuso and That Man Sánchez.

There was a slight pause, and the lady said, rather embarrassed, “Yes, but this no-tax thing wasn’t our idea, you know. It was theirs.”

For reasons of expediency, abbreviated to “DoS” (Daughter of Satan) and “EiC” (Exorcist-in-Chief) respectively:

Food for thought

Scene: a computer screen showing a dark room.

Oct 3

A chorus of wolves howling mournfully in the background.

Thanks for the vote of confidence, expressisverbis, but my repertoire really isn't that extensive. I should have done more of it years ago, when I didn't have the time either.

On screen a figure suddenly rises up in an all-black cloak, hooded head bowed, both arms slowly rising to the horizontal, palms up.

I like cooking, but not when I have to fit it in between translations.

With a snarl the figure snatches back the hood to reveal a deathly white face, blood-red lips and heavy black liner around menacing eyes, and a shock of black hair waving freely around her head.

Even the Basques who, as everyone knows, invented food, occasionally murmur that I should put in for a cookery course.

The eyes roll back horribly white and red-veined in their sockets as she begins to moan hoarsely: “All hail to Thee, my Lord and Master, my Dark Prince, my …”

It's just a murmur, though.

Screen flickers and Sánchez suddenly appears, grinning all supercilious.

Today I've contented myself with some fishy rice and langostinos.

EiC: Oh, just “Pedro” will be fine, Isabel.

Out at 8.30 this morning to the market for the langostinos in fearsome rain and wind, too. I'm under strict instructions from the Basques who, as everyone knows, invented fishy rice and langostinos, to make sure I fry those langostinos in garlic at the very last minute before I add them in.

No need to stand on formalities here, you know.

None of the amateur business of letting them cook in the hot fishy stock.

We’re all friends now.

Not allowed over here. Punishable by law.

All on the same team. All on the same page. All on the same …

Naturally I bow to this superior knowledge.

DoS (glares at screen, leans down, turns off small floor fan, whereupon hair falls down to her shoulders. Sits down.): Just my morning meditation, Pedro.

Oh, langostinos al ajillo...

To counter the stress of running a region the size of Madrid, you know.

Thanks for the vote of confidence, expressisverbis, but my repertoire really isn't that extensive.

EiC: You should try yoga, you know, like me. To counter the stress of running a country the size of Spain, you know. Which includes Madrid. Where I’m quite pleased with the way things are going, now that you’ve agreed to let me implement my measures instead of your measures.

I should have done more of it years ago, when I didn't have the time either.

DoS: Now you’ve agreed to let me let you implement your measures along with my measures, which were working anyway, I too am pleased.

Out at 8.30 this morning to the market for the langostinos in fearsome rain and wind, too.

EiC: Splendid. After all, you did say that implementing my measures in preference to your measures would lead to chaos, and that hasn’t been the case, has it?

I'm under strict instructions from the Basques who, as everyone knows, invented fishy rice and langostinos, to make sure I fry those langostinos in garlic at the very last minute before I add them in.

DoS: No, but that’s probably due to the knock-on effect of the measures I had already implemented before I agreed to allow you to implement your measures in addition to my measures. In the transversal sense, I mean.

Not allowed over here.

Plus I ultimately have the option of complaining about your measures not working if it all goes south.

Punishable by law. Naturally I bow to this superior knowledge.

EiC: What do you mean by transversal?

The garlic shrimp recipe is perfect for those who want to eat seafood but have little time to cook.

DoS: Transversal means what every politician means it to mean. It’s that kind of word. It’s …

I will include it in my meal plan for the coming week. I prefer eating rather than cooking, but today I made a carrot cake roll.

Two men dressed in black suits appear in the room behind her, carrying a long rectangular box.

Please to not pay much attention to its look, it is a bit clumsy like me

Man: Here you are, Miss, the Super Premium Eternal Rest. Noble pine, superior brass handles, and red velvet interior.

IMG\_20201003\_162817\_resized\_20201003\_042938017

Where do you want it?

Carrot cake Oct 4

DoS (looking round):

Thanks again expressisverbis, for the carrot cake. Looks divine!!

Oh, er, yes, can you just leave it there and that’ll be all, er, thanks.

But...

Man: Yes, well, here’s the bill, Miss.

... I made the mistake of showing it to the Basques who, as everyone knows, invented carrot cake, and they said Mm, interesting, and we'd really need to reach out to our experts for an in-depth analysis, but our initial impression is that perhaps the carrot/sponge ratio is a little too high on the carrot side.

To be paid in cash. Government of the Autonomous Community of Madrid. No VAT.

They asked if I wanted the full report with graphs and refererences to ISO and the Basque Culinary Center (yes, it exists, with US spelling and all) and the rest, as usual, but I politely declined on the grounds that after all this is a "non-domestic event".

That was it, wasn’t it?

So here today it's leftovers from yesterday, from the day before yesterday (the classic spicy red bean + chorizo stew) and a very ripe avocado that's been crying out to be processed for a few days now.

DoS: Yes, yes, er ... (steals a glance at screen, and starts) … I mean, no, how dare you, sir?

I had thought of an ingenious concoction to combine all three in a daring avant-garde dish, but I copped out, I desisted on the impossible challenge, and they're all going to be served up separately and cold, cunningly disguised as Non-Guacamole with Spicy Legumes and Marinated Rice.

It should be made out to me personally, because I’m paying for it, and obviously it has to have VAT.

I can't risk a bad mark, you understand.

Just get out, will you?

It's scary.

I’ll sort it out later.

100

Men leave – turns back to screen, flustered.

K Oct 4

EiC (smiling smugly, half-standing to peer closer at the coffin behind her): A death in the family?

What can it all mean?

I’m so sorry.

Velká Británie

Tut-tut, Isabel. Unjustifiable expenses?

švédština

You know I’ll have to report this to the Cabinet.

No, Merv, please don’t go!

And it might get leaked to the press, you never know.

Oct 4

Female voice calls off screen: Pedro, Pedrito, get a move on, will you?

So basically you’re trying to get enough of us to chip in saying “No, Merv, please don’t go!” to take you to 100,000?

We’re going to miss all the fun at the party down in Cascais.

Well, I for one am not falling for that. Oldest trick in the book.

The chauffeur says the pilot’s ready to go at the aerodrome.

(Or is that firing ping pong balls out of surprising places?)

EiC (flustered): Er, coming, coming, Bego, dear ...

No, you’re going to have to earn those final hits.

DoS (smiling smugly): Tut-tut, Pedro.

After all, we’re all wondering how the Little Translator and Sergeant Garmandia have been getting on during lockdown...

Unjustifiable expenses?

That's ...

Taking that official Falcón plane again?

... the spirit, Chris. Good for another few hits!!

Just you and Begoña?

Every little helps.

The wife who suddenly got a plum job just after you became PM?

Alternatively, I could just hit the thing a few hundred times a day myself if I really wanted to waste my time!!

You know I’ll have to report this to my own regional cabinet. And it might get leaked to the press, you never know.

But I don't think it's going to get there regardless.

EiC (sighs): Let’s just call it quits, shall we?

To Sigh in Madrid (fast running out of these now)

(disappears from screen)

10:03

Wolves begin their low howling again on Isabel’s screen, along with diabolical cackling as the single word AZNAR appears on screen, above a sinister face with a toothbrush moustache, smiling evilly.

Going back to the format I was using for most of March and April, today’s headline in the paper: “A project in deep crisis”.

DoS (arms rising again): All hail to Thee, my Lord and Master …

Yes, total despondency.

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page33.html

Loss after loss. Last but one in the league table during the crisis.

Local time: 06:35

Except this is the local paper and what they’re sighing at is Athletic Bilbao’s away loss against another Basque team, Alavés.

Who are you trying to kid?

They also lost the previous match at home to Cádiz, hence the sombre mood.

:-D

I suppose it’s the same everywhere.

Oct 5

When spirits are down due to the economy and the virus, the only vain hope left is the town’s own group of overpaid ball-shufflers.

Thanks!

What probably isn’t the same everywhere - probably, because I’m willing to stand corrected if anyone else points out the same phenomenon where they are - is that the Bilbao team has one golden rule for its players.

You are a big liar. (Kidding!)

They don’t have to be born in Bilbao, of course, but they must be Basque, or from Navarra, which is lumped in with the ancient Basque territories.

By the way, Basques have a delicious Basque burnt cheesecake and I will see if I will be able to cook it. I won't post the picture because I certainly will burn it more than needed!

None of this signing up just anybody, oh no, can’t mix footie blood. Basque players born on the other side of the border are accepted too, and one of their ex-players, Bixente Lizarazu, from St Jean de Luz, now commentates on French TV, I’m told.

Out of curiosity, I did my search and I found out the carrot cake comes probably from Switzerland, but its origins are also disputed by England and France. I loved the dialogue between I. Ayuso and P. Sanchez, and their fancy names!

Anyway, let’s travel further south to Madrid and sneak into a teleconference to take a behind-the-scenes look at the latest online meeting between That Woman Ayuso and That Man Sánchez.

Alexandra Scott

For reasons of expediency, abbreviated to “DoS” (Daughter of Satan) and “EiC” (Exorcist-in-Chief) respectively:

Local time: 01:35

Scene: a computer screen showing a dark room.

Emerging from lurkerdom to express thanks and appreciation

A chorus of wolves howling mournfully in the background.

To say, sure hope you reconsider abandoning your diary!

On screen a figure suddenly rises up in an all-black cloak, hooded head bowed, both arms slowly rising to the horizontal, palms up.

Frankly I'm surprised there hasn't been an avalanche of protests from the audience here.

With a snarl the figure snatches back the hood to reveal a deathly white face, blood-red lips and heavy black liner around menacing eyes, and a shock of black hair waving freely around her head.

Your engaging and witty posts have definitely been the highlight of proz over the past few months, not to mention a cultural tour de force.

The eyes roll back horribly white and red-veined in their sockets as she begins to moan hoarsely: “All hail to Thee, my Lord and Master, my Dark Prince, my …”

Wishing you all the very best whatever path you take.

Screen flickers and Sánchez suddenly appears, grinning all supercilious.

Local time: 07:35

EiC: Oh, just “Pedro” will be fine, Isabel.

Lurkerdom

No need to stand on formalities here, you know.

Oct 6

We’re all friends now.

Delighted to see you around here again, Alexandra!!!

All on the same team. All on the same page. All on the same …

Lurkerdom ... to paraphrase a well-known song, "... and I think to myself, What a wonderful word!"

DoS (glares at screen, leans down, turns off small floor fan, whereupon hair falls down to her shoulders. Sits down.): Just my morning meditation, Pedro.

And a "cultural tour de force", too. Merci beaucoup!!

To counter the stress of running a region the size of Madrid, you know.

(better pore over the dictionary later ...)

EiC: You should try yoga, you know, like me. To counter the stress of running a country the size of Spain, you know. Which includes Madrid. Where I’m quite pleased with the way things are going, now that you’ve agreed to let me implement my measures instead of your measures.

Culture, eh?

DoS: Now you’ve agreed to let me let you implement your measures along with my measures, which were working anyway, I too am pleased.

Up early this side of the Pond to process some interminable blaargh, and in the light of what you said I thought I'd take a break to write this when I came across a tedious treatise on "cultural idiosyncrasies" within the last hour.

EiC: Splendid. After all, you did say that implementing my measures in preference to your measures would lead to chaos, and that hasn’t been the case, has it?

Funnily enough, there is quite a lot of material in stock for the Diary. Oh my. Some scenarios both brash and rash, some lewd and crude, a few more scurrilous and scandalous, and others cynical and critical. I can't help it, really I can't. But when I read the stuff I'm on at the minute, waiting for the dread moment when the words "a change of paradigm" and "creating synergies moving forward" will leap out at me from some published poser's pennings, it always spurs me on, because I think Hey Mervyn, at least you can't write any worser than this.

DoS: No, but that’s probably due to the knock-on effect of the measures I had already implemented before I agreed to allow you to implement your measures in addition to my measures. In the transversal sense, I mean.

..

Plus I ultimately have the option of complaining about your measures not working if it all goes south.

Some time later ...

EiC: What do you mean by transversal?

... Oh, and I get tour de force now. Very often these expressions are easier than you think, if you just step back from them. A "tower of strength" - well, it's way, way over the top, Alexandra, but ...

DoS: Transversal means what every politician means it to mean. It’s that kind of word. It’s …

Thanks again!

Two men dressed in black suits appear in the room behind her, carrying a long rectangular box.

I couldn't agree more with Alexandra.

Man: Here you are, Miss, the Super Premium Eternal Rest. Noble pine, superior brass handles, and red velvet interior.

I think you have been a victim of demonic possession, by the couple, Daughter of Satan and Exorcist-in-Chief. And therefore, you are having this scary idea of leaving the diary. Let's move on and keep up your good work!

Where do you want it?

We have the final say. Here you don't make your own decisions, ok?

DoS (looking round):

Calling all lurkers

Oh, er, yes, can you just leave it there and that’ll be all, er, thanks.

To make a contribution here, give a thumbs up, submit a limerick, que sais-je!

Man: Yes, well, here’s the bill, Miss.

Share your experience so far with Covid-19, so that Mervyn doesn't have to generate all 100,000 hits on his own!!

To be paid in cash. Government of the Autonomous Community of Madrid. No VAT.

I have been very fortunate so far as a freelancer to see no slowdown in work volumes, and to be living in a small village with access to services in a nearby town. As well, no one in my family or circle of friends has been infected. Looking at the curve for Canada though I see it starting a st... See more

That was it, wasn’t it?

Lurkers lurking

DoS: Yes, yes, er ... (steals a glance at screen, and starts) … I mean, no, how dare you, sir?

Good one, Alexandra!

It should be made out to me personally, because I’m paying for it, and obviously it has to have VAT.

It's going back a bit now, but I don't remember much chat from Canada at all since March.

Just get out, will you?

And I didn't know Canada does Thanksgiving too, thinking it was just the US, pardon my ignorance ...

I’ll sort it out later.

Fall for Canada

Men leave – turns back to screen, flustered.

Yes indeed, but we celebrate Thanksgiving at the proper time, during harvest season, next Monday. In the US it is in late November, long past the time you'd be able to pick apples or pumpkins. I realize there are a bunch of harvest zones, but still...

EiC (smiling smugly, half-standing to peer closer at the coffin behind her): A death in the family?

In keeping with taking the right precautions, we will not be celebrating with our kids or other family members this year. Too risky. Fingers crossed for year-end, ok, I'll say it, Christmas, but I'm not getting my hopes up:

I’m so sorry.

http://xl8.link/2cn

Tut-tut, Isabel. Unjustifiable expenses?

Nizozemsko

You know I’ll have to report this to the Cabinet.

(2010)

And it might get leaked to the press, you never know.

I thought you'd never ask!

Female voice calls off screen: Pedro, Pedrito, get a move on, will you?

Here's a limerick (with my humble apologies to the English language and the great Edward Lear):

We’re going to miss all the fun at the party down in Cascais.

There was a young man in Bilbao,

The chauffeur says the pilot’s ready to go at the aerodrome.

Whose diary is our dazibao.

EiC (flustered): Er, coming, coming, Bego, dear ...

He'll reach 100,000 hits

DoS (smiling smugly): Tut-tut, Pedro.

Which purposely fits

Unjustifiable expenses?

The ambition of the young man in Bilbao.

Taking that official Falcón plane again?

[quote]Alexandra Scott wrote:

Just you and Begoña?

Non-Thanksgiving and Non-Christmas, anyone?

The wife who suddenly got a plum job just after you became PM?

Have I mentioned the "non-fiestas" they have here?

You know I’ll have to report this to my own regional cabinet. And it might get leaked to the press, you never know.

Obviously Bilbao cancelled its August fiestas, and so did the other Basque cities, and no bulls in Pamplona or fiestas either. But there and in other places, because here each town and village has its fiestas, and all over the State too, and the season goes on until about now.

EiC (sighs): Let’s just call it quits, shall we?

So someone came up with the idea of "non-fiestas". What dat?

(disappears from screen)

Since nobody knew, they all turned up to see, all their mates were there, so they had a few drinks, a few more drinks, and suddenly the bars were full again and the non-fiestas had turned into fiestas.

Wolves begin their low howling again on Isabel’s screen, along with diabolical cackling as the single word AZNAR appears on screen, above a sinister face with a toothbrush moustache, smiling evilly.

Only the other day 200 young things were dispersed by the police at around 3 am during the non-fiestas of some place near here I can't recall now. No distancing, no masks etc. Two or three arrests, waste containers overturned and set on fire. Pfff ...

DoS (arms rising again): All hail to Thee, my Lord and Master …

Well, we don't have Thanksgiving over here, of course, but thoughts now are turning to Christmas and New Year ...

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page33.html

Party time

Local time: 06:35

Sounds a bit like the universities over here. The government has been forced to promise they'll unlock the student halls and let the buggers come home for Christmas along with all their Covid, STIs, dodgy mix tapes and pot politics.

Who are you trying to kid?

Limerick

:-D

Much appreciated, P.L.F.!!

Oct 5

Many thanks!

Thanks!

Especially laudable for coming up with a non-Spanish word to rhyme with Bilbao. I must admit I'd never heard of dazibao. After my Canadian Thanksgiving admission earlier, looks like this afternoon is an uncomfortable demonstration of my unculturedness.

You are a big liar. (Kidding!)

Viva la cultura

By the way, Basques have a delicious Basque burnt cheesecake and I will see if I will be able to cook it. I won't post the picture because I certainly will burn it more than needed!

I definitely had to look up "dazibao" and lo and behold, it's the name of an art gallery 90 minutes away. But darn, it's in a red zone, so no go...

Out of curiosity, I did my search and I found out the carrot cake comes probably from Switzerland, but its origins are also disputed by England and France. I loved the dialogue between I. Ayuso and P. Sanchez, and their fancy names!

Well that was the first google hit. Probably the meaning P.L.F. had in mind was:

Alexandra Scott

Dazibao definition, (in China) a wallposter

Local time: 01:35

Thanks for expanding our horizons!!

But don't worry, Mervyn, I'm sure most Americans have no idea we celebrate Thanksgiving in Canada...

Emerging from lurkerdom to express thanks and appreciation

To say, sure hope you reconsider abandoning your diary!

Red zones

Frankly I'm surprised there hasn't been an avalanche of protests from the audience here.

Sounds intriguing. Canadian colour coding. Madrid could do with some of that. Red sounds like a no-no. Is there an "amber OK-but-watch-your-dad-blamed-step-friend" area, and a "green-go" area too?

I seem to remember that's the origin of the word "gringo" way back, when white Americans were teaching the Latinos what traffic lights meant, something like that.

Your engaging and witty posts have definitely been the highlight of proz over the past few months, not to mention a cultural tour de force.

And, although this is only a theory of mine, and I haven't googled it because - outside translation - sometimes I get a kick out of not googling things just to see if I'm right, and blurting out the idea to all and sundry, like now, and only googling it afterwards - I feel sure that the Spanish surname "Guzmán", which is all over Latin America, but you won't find it in Spain so much, dates back to some scenario or other in which an American slapped one of the nameless natives working his arse off for him on the shoulder and exclaimed "Good man, good man!", and the proud native strutted around afterwards saying "Goodman, I am goodman", and hence the surname.

Wishing you all the very best whatever path you take.

Local time: 07:35

Can you tell I'm trying to make up for the earlier non-culture?

Right. Time to go and google Guzmán ...

Lurkerdom

Oct 6

Two solitudes: two alert systems Oct 6

Delighted to see you around here again, Alexandra!!!

[Title contains a subtle cultural reference perhaps relevant only to Canadians]

Lurkerdom ... to paraphrase a well-known song, "... and I think to myself, What a wonderful word!"

Of course the alert system in Quebec, using colour coding, is not the same as elsewhere. In straight-laced Ontario they are using a stage numbering system, but to be honest I think these approaches may be measuring different things. Not at all sure what the other provinces are doing (health care delivery being a provincial matter).

And a "cultural tour de force", too. Merci beaucoup!!

Looking more closely, here in Estrie we've got Palier 3 – Alerte modérée (with no actual mention of a colour), but the labels don't change the fact that the precautions remain the same--wear a mask, keep 2 m distance, wash your hands.

(better pore over the dictionary later ...)

Always wondered about the surname Guzman in southern America, looking forward to reading what you find out about it!

Culture, eh?

Hardly conclusive

Up early this side of the Pond to process some interminable blaargh, and in the light of what you said I thought I'd take a break to write this when I came across a tedious treatise on "cultural idiosyncrasies" within the last hour.

This is what we find:

Funnily enough, there is quite a lot of material in stock for the Diary. Oh my. Some scenarios both brash and rash, some lewd and crude, a few more scurrilous and scandalous, and others cynical and critical. I can't help it, really I can't. But when I read the stuff I'm on at the minute, waiting for the dread moment when the words "a change of paradigm" and "creating synergies moving forward" will leap out at me from some published poser's pennings, it always spurs me on, because I think Hey Mervyn, at least you can't write any worser than this.

The Guzman surname comes from uncertain origins. Two of the disputed theories include:

..

A descendant of Guzmán (good man), a lord or nobleman. It could also indicate a cadet or noble who served in the military. A habitational surname from de Guzmán, or "of Guzmán," derived from the village of Guzmán (es) in the province of Burgos, Spain. As an eastern Ashkenazic name, it could be a variant of Gusman, an occupational name for a metalworker, from the Yiddish gus, meaning "casting" and man.

Some time later ...

They can say what they like on number two, but I don't reckon there are many Guzmanes left in Burgos. I was there in the summer, and I never met even one.

... Oh, and I get tour de force now. Very often these expressions are easier than you think, if you just step back from them. A "tower of strength" - well, it's way, way over the top, Alexandra, but ...

As for your title, I reckon I've finally redeemed myself culturewise:

Thanks again!

Two Solitudes is a 1945 novel by Hugh MacLennan. It popularized the term two solitudes to refer to the perceived lack of communication between English- and French-speaking Canadians.

I couldn't agree more with Alexandra.

Et voilà!

I think you have been a victim of demonic possession, by the couple, Daughter of Satan and Exorcist-in-Chief. And therefore, you are having this scary idea of leaving the diary. Let's move on and keep up your good work!

(Zere you arrr)

We have the final say. Here you don't make your own decisions, ok?

page-34

Calling all lurkers

Local time: 02:49

Please stand by

To make a contribution here, give a thumbs up, submit a limerick, que sais-je!

Hair now on fire since I have to deliver a PPT translation at 5 pm, having spent most of my time so far today trying to match wits with marvellous Mervyn.

Share your experience so far with Covid-19, so that Mervyn doesn't have to generate all 100,000 hits on his own!!

I have been very fortunate so far as a freelancer to see no slowdown in work volumes, and to be living in a small village with access to services in a nearby town. As well, no one in my family or circle of friends has been infected. Looking at the curve for Canada though I see it starting a st... See more

Thanks for Guzman facts, somewhat disappointing.

But Hugh MacLennan's book worth a read if you are curious about the cultural tensions between settlers in otherwise placid Canada.

Lurkers lurking

Local time: 08:49

Good one, Alexandra!

Home alone (or am I?)

It's going back a bit now, but I don't remember much chat from Canada at all since March.

Oct 7

And I didn't know Canada does Thanksgiving too, thinking it was just the US, pardon my ignorance ...

There I was, minding my own business around 11 pm last night, doing a last bit of administration on the office PC, just about to call it a day and hit the sack, when suddenly the phone rang. A brisk American voice on the line said:

Fall for Canada

Yes indeed, but we celebrate Thanksgiving at the proper time, during harvest season, next Monday. In the US it is in late November, long past the time you'd be able to pick apples or pumpkins. I realize there are a bunch of harvest zones, but still...

“Mr Henderson?

In keeping with taking the right precautions, we will not be celebrating with our kids or other family members this year. Too risky. Fingers crossed for year-end, ok, I'll say it, Christmas, but I'm not getting my hopes up:

I must ask you to drop everything immediately. And I mean everything. You are about to receive our request for a videoconference. It is imperative you grant this request, and ...”

http://xl8.link/2cn

Now, at one time I might have been a thick hick from a cold, dark, rainy, windy, haily, boggy, muddy outpost on the Wet Rock, but I made tracks out of the village a long time ago, and I don’t fall for that kind of scam, I can tell you:

“Listen to me, bozo,” I interrupted. “Forget the Google Hangout, the Skype or the videoconference, and let’s cut to the chase. The price for translating the 11,600 words on agricultural policy you’re about to offer me is five euros per word. Source word. You’re going to pay me immediately, of course, aren’t you?

Nizozemsko

A cheque, by any chance?

(2010)

Sure, send it over right away, oh, and make sure you overpay me for no particular reason, too. So 100 K seems about right. Yes, let’s go for 100 K.”

I thought you'd never ask!

The Yank seemed a little confused.

Here's a limerick (with my humble apologies to the English language and the great Edward Lear):

“Er … 100 K?”

There was a young man in Bilbao,

“That’s what I said. 100 K. I’ll say it again if you like. 100 K. One hundred thousand. One. Hundred. Thousand. Just to make it clear. Two times fifty K. 100 K.”

Whose diary is our dazibao.

That should rattle him, I thought. He reckoned I was just another sucker. The nerve of the guy.

He'll reach 100,000 hits

“There must be some mistake,” the voice said. “My name is Theodore P. Offalburger, and I’m about to set you up for a videoconference with the present and indeed the next President of the United States of Great America. You’ll remember your previous discussion with our esteemed leader some time ago, naturally …?”

Which purposely fits

The Don again!

The ambition of the young man in Bilbao.

What a surprise. Although there was something slightly odd in what he had just said, which I wondered momentarily about, but I couldn’t put my finger on it just then, because he’d been talking really fast.

[quote]Alexandra Scott wrote:

“Oh yes, of course, of course I’ll accept the conference, Mr, mm, Offal … Offalskoffer, was it?”

There was a long silence. A very long silence. Then he pursed his lips. I couldn’t see him, naturally, but it definitely sounded like a kind of lip-pursing noise. Finally he spoke again. Necessarily unpursing his lips to do so. Well, I assume he did, I mean, and unpursing your lips is probably a lot quieter than pursing them, but perhaps we should get on here …

Non-Thanksgiving and Non-Christmas, anyone?

“Offalburger, Mr Henderson. Offalburger. Now, you have five minutes to prepare yourself. Might I suggest a more appropriate attire?

Have I mentioned the "non-fiestas" they have here?

Perhaps we could lose the pyjamas?”

Obviously Bilbao cancelled its August fiestas, and so did the other Basque cities, and no bulls in Pamplona or fiestas either. But there and in other places, because here each town and village has its fiestas, and all over the State too, and the season goes on until about now.

“Oh yes, right, of course, this won’t do at all,” I agreed, nodding as I looked down at my striped outfit. Then it hit me:

So someone came up with the idea of "non-fiestas". What dat?

“You what?

Since nobody knew, they all turned up to see, all their mates were there, so they had a few drinks, a few more drinks, and suddenly the bars were full again and the non-fiestas had turned into fiestas.

How the hell do you know I’m wearing pyjamas, Offalburger?

Only the other day 200 young things were dispersed by the police at around 3 am during the non-fiestas of some place near here I can't recall now. No distancing, no masks etc. Two or three arrests, waste containers overturned and set on fire. Pfff ...

How can you possibly know that?”

Well, we don't have Thanksgiving over here, of course, but thoughts now are turning to Christmas and New Year ...

The reply was clipped, with just a smidgeon of triumphant arrogance:

“This is Washington, Mr Henderson. The White House. West Wing. We know everything. Five minutes.”

Party time

As the phone went dead, I looked slowly to my left, then slowly to my right. I looked up at the ceiling and down at the floor. I felt around under the desk. I looked behind the mirror on the wall. I stared at the phone, and I even peered into the PC. Nothing to be seen.

Sounds a bit like the universities over here. The government has been forced to promise they'll unlock the student halls and let the buggers come home for Christmas along with all their Covid, STIs, dodgy mix tapes and pot politics.

These are frightening times we live in ...

Limerick

TO BE CONTINUED – and meanwhile …

Much appreciated, P.L.F.!!

Many thanks!

Be safe. Be vigilant. And be scared. Be very scared.

Local time: 07:49

Especially laudable for coming up with a non-Spanish word to rhyme with Bilbao. I must admit I'd never heard of dazibao. After my Canadian Thanksgiving admission earlier, looks like this afternoon is an uncomfortable demonstration of my unculturedness.

Speaking of family names...

Viva la cultura

I definitely had to look up "dazibao" and lo and behold, it's the name of an art gallery 90 minutes away. But darn, it's in a red zone, so no go...

It applies to British and Irish surnames:

Well that was the first google hit. Probably the meaning P.L.F. had in mind was:

"Surnames dictionary goes free for family bonding in lockdown"

https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/may/15/oxford-surnames-dictionary-goes-free-for-family-bonding-in-lockdown

Dazibao definition, (in China) a wallposter

As for "Guzmán" (or "Gusmão" in my native language) I believe the third explanation provided by Mervyn seems more plausible.

Thanks for expanding our horizons!!

Dorothee Rault

But don't worry, Mervyn, I'm sure most Americans have no idea we celebrate Thanksgiving in Canada...

(2007)

Red zones

Great story!

Sounds intriguing. Canadian colour coding. Madrid could do with some of that. Red sounds like a no-no. Is there an "amber OK-but-watch-your-dad-blamed-step-friend" area, and a "green-go" area too?

And great writing!

I seem to remember that's the origin of the word "gringo" way back, when white Americans were teaching the Latinos what traffic lights meant, something like that.

Hope there is more to come!!!

And, although this is only a theory of mine, and I haven't googled it because - outside translation - sometimes I get a kick out of not googling things just to see if I'm right, and blurting out the idea to all and sundry, like now, and only googling it afterwards - I feel sure that the Spanish surname "Guzmán", which is all over Latin America, but you won't find it in Spain so much, dates back to some scenario or other in which an American slapped one of the nameless natives working his arse off for him on the shoulder and exclaimed "Good man, good man!", and the proud native strutted around afterwards saying "Goodman, I am goodman", and hence the surname.

Home alone II – The Nixon Criterion

Can you tell I'm trying to make up for the earlier non-culture?

Oct 8

Right. Time to go and google Guzmán ...

You can imagine how nervous I was after the Offalburger call. Maybe Trump was going to come up with the goods on that Mexican wall translation contract he’d mentioned last time. At 100 K a month, too. 100 K!

Two solitudes: two alert systems Oct 6

But that had been ages ago, and I’d heard nothing since. Had he changed his mind?

[Title contains a subtle cultural reference perhaps relevant only to Canadians]

It certainly wouldn’t be the first 180º turnaround with the man. Could he be annoyed with me?

Of course the alert system in Quebec, using colour coding, is not the same as elsewhere. In straight-laced Ontario they are using a stage numbering system, but to be honest I think these approaches may be measuring different things. Not at all sure what the other provinces are doing (health care delivery being a provincial matter).

Could it have been something I’d said recently?

Looking more closely, here in Estrie we've got Palier 3 – Alerte modérée (with no actual mention of a colour), but the labels don't change the fact that the precautions remain the same--wear a mask, keep 2 m distance, wash your hands.

None of you said anything, did you?

Always wondered about the surname Guzman in southern America, looking forward to reading what you find out about it!

Anyway, up he came on screen, the scowling bulldog, just like on TV. I could see a McDonald’s carton and what looked like a smoothie beside him on the desk. He leaned forward when he saw me, and reached out his arm to touch the screen with his elbow. “OOOOKAAAAY,” I thought to myself, mystified, but I smiled and touched his elbow with my own on screen all the same. Behind him there was a bookcase absolutely stuffed with books. All the same colour, too. Wait a minute, they all had the same words on the side. I peered closer. I could only just see the title on the spines. It looked like … could it be?

Hardly conclusive

… yes, every last one of them was the same book all right – The Art of the Deal, by one Donald Trump. I cleared my throat. Better say something complimentary, just in case:

This is what we find:

“Don,” I started off, “you’re looking good. Very good, in fact. If I may say so, rumours of your death were greatly exaggerated.”

The Guzman surname comes from uncertain origins. Two of the disputed theories include:

His eyes narrowed. “My death?

A descendant of Guzmán (good man), a lord or nobleman. It could also indicate a cadet or noble who served in the military. A habitational surname from de Guzmán, or "of Guzmán," derived from the village of Guzmán (es) in the province of Burgos, Spain. As an eastern Ashkenazic name, it could be a variant of Gusman, an occupational name for a metalworker, from the Yiddish gus, meaning "casting" and man.

What d’you … oh yeah, I see what you mean now, right, sure!” There was a very, very mysterious sly grin on his face now. “There’s a couple things you don’t know there, for sure. We’ll get to the virus later. But wow, that’s a good one, pal, “rumours of my death”, I like that. You sure come up with some original talk.”

They can say what they like on number two, but I don't reckon there are many Guzmanes left in Burgos. I was there in the summer, and I never met even one.

I was about to shake my head wryly and give up the quote, but then a little voice said to me, “Get smart now, lad”:

“Yes, that one just, just, erm, occurred to me right now when you came up on screen.” I shrugged and beamed at him. “Don’t ask me how. But I thought you’d be looking a little peakier, what with your recent infection and all that.”

As for your title, I reckon I've finally redeemed myself culturewise:

Two Solitudes is a 1945 novel by Hugh MacLennan. It popularized the term two solitudes to refer to the perceived lack of communication between English- and French-speaking Canadians.

He nodded. That cunning grin again. What was I missing here?

“I’m good, really, real good (I winced, but only inwardly). "And, hey, I would have gotten in touch earlier, because I know you were waiting for me on the Mexican wall thing to keep out all those rapists and smack merchants and no-good hombres, but then all this virus stuff and demos and riots everywhere came up, so the wall’s on hold now. But I might have another job for you. Maybe a couple of jobs. A personal one you could maybe help me out with, and then … well, fact is, I was wondering if you could help out getting me re-elected. A bit of help with speeches, that kind of thing." He threw out his hands. "I’m surrounded by assholes here, as you know.”

Et voilà!

Now, after the Mexican disappointment, things were looking up!

(Zere you arrr)

But, as we all know, it’s best to get the terms straight right from the get-go …

page-34

“Would that be for the same, er, 100 K?” I queried. “In a month?

Local time: 02:49

100 K?

Please stand by

One hundred thousand in a month?”

Hair now on fire since I have to deliver a PPT translation at 5 pm, having spent most of my time so far today trying to match wits with marvellous Mervyn.

“Hey, sure,” laughed Don. “100 K it is. One hundred thousand. I never go back on a deal. 100 K, you got it.” He leaned back and stretched.

Thanks for Guzman facts, somewhat disappointing.

I decided to throw him a bone. “For now, on the subject of your re-election campaign, I’ll tell you one thing for free. Don’t call it the Campaign to RE-Elect the President like Nixon did. Whoever heard of a serious campaign called “CREEP” for short?

But Hugh MacLennan's book worth a read if you are curious about the cultural tensions between settlers in otherwise placid Canada.

But what’s this personal thing?”

Local time: 08:49

The big man was uncomfortable. He fiddled with his hands. “It’s Mel,” he said, finally. “I feel we’re growing apart. I think she’s getting fed up with the presidency. Which isn’t good news, considering I’m going for another term. She’s all moody. Her mom was the same. She gets more like her mother every day,” he sighed.

Home alone (or am I?)

“Don’t fret, Don. It’s a fact of life,” I consoled him. “All women turn into their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That is his.”

Oct 7

POTUS sat bolt upright. “Man, you have some repartee there. How do you think these things up?

There I was, minding my own business around 11 pm last night, doing a last bit of administration on the office PC, just about to call it a day and hit the sack, when suddenly the phone rang. A brisk American voice on the line said:

Do you think I could, you know, use that line of yours myself?

“Mr Henderson?

That would go down a treat in a speech at one of those goddamn boring press dinners I have to host now and again.”

I must ask you to drop everything immediately. And I mean everything. You are about to receive our request for a videoconference. It is imperative you grant this request, and ...”

It happened again. I was on the verge of mentioning Oscar Wilde, but then another little voice said to me - rather inappropriately considering the circumstances – “Yes we can, Mervyn”. So I just said, “Sure, use it if you like, Don. But, erm, just be sure you don’t attribute it specifically to me, that’s all. I’m, erm, kinda shy about these things.”

Now, at one time I might have been a thick hick from a cold, dark, rainy, windy, haily, boggy, muddy outpost on the Wet Rock, but I made tracks out of the village a long time ago, and I don’t fall for that kind of scam, I can tell you:

The President was pleased now. “I knew you could help me out!

“Listen to me, bozo,” I interrupted. “Forget the Google Hangout, the Skype or the videoconference, and let’s cut to the chase. The price for translating the 11,600 words on agricultural policy you’re about to offer me is five euros per word. Source word. You’re going to pay me immediately, of course, aren’t you?

We’ll deal with Mel later, though. So what about these elections?

A cheque, by any chance?

Not going too good, man. You saw the debate with Biden, right?”

Sure, send it over right away, oh, and make sure you overpay me for no particular reason, too. So 100 K seems about right. Yes, let’s go for 100 K.”

“Only parts of it,” I admitted. “Here it was on at 3 in the morning, you see. A real shouting match. But I think you had the edge angerwise, Don. You were livid.”

The Yank seemed a little confused.

“Pfff!” he grumped. “Hardly surprising. You mentioned Nixon just now, right?

“Er … 100 K?”

Well, that bastard Nixoned me right before it.”

“That’s what I said. 100 K. I’ll say it again if you like. 100 K. One hundred thousand. One. Hundred. Thousand. Just to make it clear. Two times fifty K. 100 K.”

“Biden … Nixoned you?

What the …?”

That should rattle him, I thought. He reckoned I was just another sucker. The nerve of the guy.

“Yeah, it’s a term someone in the White House team made up. Nixoning is, well, you remember that interview Nixon had with the British man Frost, don’t you?

“There must be some mistake,” the voice said. “My name is Theodore P. Offalburger, and I’m about to set you up for a videoconference with the present and indeed the next President of the United States of Great America. You’ll remember your previous discussion with our esteemed leader some time ago, naturally …?”

They even made a film out of it some years ago. Yes, well, that was the high point in Frost’s career, it was the be all and end all for him, and for Nixon it was real important too, sure it was, think of all the shit that was going down just then, what with Vietnam and the race thing and all the pinkos and lefties running around burning up the streets and throwing bricks at the cops. So the two of them were sitting there in the studio just before they were called on set, and they were chatting, and Nixon was being real charming and all that, because he could be, you know, when he wasn’t organising burglaries and being a paranoid son of a bitch and so on, ha-ha, so he was asking how Frost was and had he slept well the night before, only seconds before they were due on, this was, just as the TV suits were approaching all servile to say “So, mm, shall we, gentlemen …?” and bring them on, and then suddenly out of nowhere Nixon asks Frost “And did you fornicate?”, and then of course Frost splutters and gasps, loses his concentration, they both walk out on set, and the interviewer’s jaw is down somewhere around his ankles and he’s a bag of nerves because he’s still in shock, whereas Nixon is smiling, calm and collected. Nixoning. It gives you the edge in an interview.”

The Don again!

What a surprise. Although there was something slightly odd in what he had just said, which I wondered momentarily about, but I couldn’t put my finger on it just then, because he’d been talking really fast.

I had to laugh. “I can see that, naturally. But Biden didn’t ask you if you’d fornicated, did he?”

“Oh yes, of course, of course I’ll accept the conference, Mr, mm, Offal … Offalskoffer, was it?”

“Oh no, he was smarter. Bidening’s a different kettle of fish altogether. Much more direct. It was the same setup, we were at the studio, about to go out to the lecterns, and were standing there in the wings, Sleepy Joe had Fancy Nancy Pelosi in tow for moral support as well, and then all of a sudden he says, all serious and deferential and polite: “You know, Mr President, politics apart, I realise there can be no doubt that you are working tremendously hard for our people, the people of this great country of ours, the men and women of America, and I admire you enormously in that capacity, as the unflinching and unswerving leader of our wonderful nation, and to demonstrate that, you see, I’ve brought you a little gift, just as a token of my respect, you understand."

"Now, where … where on earth … did I put it?” he says, frowning a little, like, and he pats his breast pocket, then he pats both his coat pockets, then he pats his pants pockets, and then he smiles and says “Ah yes, here it is, it’s in here,” and he puts his hand very slowly into one of the pockets, and takes it out very slowly too, never taking his eyes off me and grinning, and then he brings up his hand, and I’m looking at it and smiling too, because you smile when someone’s about to hand you a gift, right, and then I see there’s nothing there, and Biden he holds his hand up in front of me and gives me the finger just like that, to my face, you know, and then the both of them start to laugh and laugh and laugh and laugh at me like hyenas, just as the suits are coming over to take us to our places. And that Pelosi cow, she was going fricking apopletic, she was squealing “Oh, oh, I think I’m going to pee myself, oh God, I have, I have, I’m wetting myself here, oh sweet Jesus, where’s the ladies’ room already?”

There was a long silence. A very long silence. Then he pursed his lips. I couldn’t see him, naturally, but it definitely sounded like a kind of lip-pursing noise. Finally he spoke again. Necessarily unpursing his lips to do so. Well, I assume he did, I mean, and unpursing your lips is probably a lot quieter than pursing them, but perhaps we should get on here …

The man on screen was grim. He bunched one hand into a fist and held it up.

“Offalburger, Mr Henderson. Offalburger. Now, you have five minutes to prepare yourself. Might I suggest a more appropriate attire?

“You know, I’d have landed one right on his nose, but I just couldn’t in the studio, of course. Good job, too, and I even think that’s exactly what the motherfricker wanted me to do, because then I would have been screwed for sure, much more than I am now. So I need your help on this, pal.” He punched the palm of his other hand with the fist a few times.

Perhaps we could lose the pyjamas?”

“Crikey,” I breathed to myself (well, it was something a little stronger). “What am I getting myself into here?”

.

“Oh yes, right, of course, this won’t do at all,” I agreed, nodding as I looked down at my striped outfit. Then it hit me:

TO BE CONTINUED

“You what?

(if I learned anything from the Little Translator chronicles, it was not to try and put it all in at once, because it drives you crackers, believe me)

How the hell do you know I’m wearing pyjamas, Offalburger?

Laugh, lest we cry

Sure glad you can find the humour in this scenario!!

How can you possibly know that?”

Will be interesting to read about the "help" you provide POTUS!

I am very curious to know

The reply was clipped, with just a smidgeon of triumphant arrogance:

Oct 9

Let's see how will you help "Don" in his re-election, although he is being

“This is Washington, Mr Henderson. The White House. West Wing. We know everything. Five minutes.”

As the phone went dead, I looked slowly to my left, then slowly to my right. I looked up at the ceiling and down at the floor. I felt around under the desk. I looked behind the mirror on the wall. I stared at the phone, and I even peered into the PC. Nothing to be seen.

images

Spaniards in the works

These are frightening times we live in ...

The Princess of Darkness was as good as her word. She accepted Sánchez's measures because she had no choice, but she went to the courts meanwhile, and they overturned the decision. So suddenly 5 million people are no longer affected by restrictions in the capital now, and it's down to about 50,000 affected (a technicality - a couple of locations in the Madrid area were not included in the proceedings, a slip-up).

TO BE CONTINUED – and meanwhile …

So Pedro says he might fight back and declare a state of alarm in Madrid anyway. Big argument ongoing everywhere. The only thing the politicians involved (and many uninvolved too, shouting from the sidelines at the ref, whoever that actually is, because there might be two or three of them) agree on is that it is much better to waste time arguing and holding press conferences than actually doing anything about Covid.

Be safe. Be vigilant. And be scared. Be very scared.

Below, the unhappy couple. Note those frightening eyes on the right. Pedro's losing this stare-out.

Local time: 07:49

https://www.vozpopuli.com/espana/reunion-sanchez-ayuso\_0\_1393061227.html

Speaking of family names...

No sooner said ...

It applies to British and Irish surnames:

"Surnames dictionary goes free for family bonding in lockdown"

Oct 10

https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/may/15/oxford-surnames-dictionary-goes-free-for-family-bonding-in-lockdown

Tanks rumbling through the streets. Military might. Rifles, machine guns. Unsmiling policemen and soldiers on every corner. A population cowed by its rulers. That'll be what Pyongyang looks like today as Kim Young 'Un and his people celebrate 75 years of the Workers' Party.

Oh no, no, not the Spanish capital!

As for "Guzmán" (or "Gusmão" in my native language) I believe the third explanation provided by Mervyn seems more plausible.

Did you think I meant Madrid?

Dorothee Rault

(2007)

No, silly, not quite like that in Madrid, but what a turnaround. Spain's Health Minister remarked tersely that, as the Presidentess had "decided to do nothing", there was no alternative but to declare a state of alarm again in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, in the format they all know by now but do not love. He added that there was "a limit to his patience", and even went so far as to lash out with "None so blind as those who will not see". So now we have direct rule of Madrid, you might say, by ... well, by Madrid actually, for at least 14 days, whereupon they need permish to do it again. Poor old madrileños. "... and madrileñas", as the socialists always quickly add.

Great story!

Actually, my main reason for posting today, amid a load of twaddley weekend blaargh, is to apologise for the word "apopletic" in Home Alone II instead of "apoplectic", to describe Nancy Pelosi's sudden attack of laughter and

And great writing!

Thanks for the spellcheck tip Oct 10

I had no idea!

Hope there is more to come!!!

Will definitely run draft posts through Antidote in future!

Home alone II – The Nixon Criterion

Oct 8

Thank you for proofreading and taking good care of English language Oct 10

I didn't noticed until the moment my brain switched to the "Portuguese/Latin mode".

You can imagine how nervous I was after the Offalburger call. Maybe Trump was going to come up with the goods on that Mexican wall translation contract he’d mentioned last time. At 100 K a month, too. 100 K!

It is "apoplectic". We also wrote it with a "c" before the "t", but since the silly "Portuguese Language Orthographic Agreement of 1990" came into force a few years ago, now we use it without that consonant.

But that had been ages ago, and I’d heard nothing since. Had he changed his mind?

Origins of the Latin language were lost by this spelling reform, which seems to not take good care of their speakers and language.

It certainly wouldn’t be the first 180º turnaround with the man. Could he be annoyed with me?

Could it have been something I’d said recently?

This is no substitute and not much of a comfort...

None of you said anything, did you?

Oct 11

but, here cases are increasing more than ever.

Anyway, up he came on screen, the scowling bulldog, just like on TV. I could see a McDonald’s carton and what looked like a smoothie beside him on the desk. He leaned forward when he saw me, and reached out his arm to touch the screen with his elbow. “OOOOKAAAAY,” I thought to myself, mystified, but I smiled and touched his elbow with my own on screen all the same. Behind him there was a bookcase absolutely stuffed with books. All the same colour, too. Wait a minute, they all had the same words on the side. I peered closer. I could only just see the title on the spines. It looked like … could it be?

… yes, every last one of them was the same book all right – The Art of the Deal, by one Donald Trump. I cleared my throat. Better say something complimentary, just in case:

We had a high number of infections yesterday in 24 hours (almost 1700 cases) and there is a significant lack of healthcare providers.

https://www.statista.com/statistics/1107359/coronavirus-cases-portugal-cumulative/

“Don,” I started off, “you’re looking good. Very good, in fact. If I may say so, rumours of your death were greatly exaggerated.”

Portugal and Spain refuse new border closure according to the latest Iberian summit.

His eyes narrowed. “My death?

I know this will end. Patience is a virtue and wisdom is a defence.

What d’you … oh yeah, I see what you mean now, right, sure!” There was a very, very mysterious sly grin on his face now. “There’s a couple things you don’t know there, for sure. We’ll get to the virus later. But wow, that’s a good one, pal, “rumours of my death”, I like that. You sure come up with some original talk.”

100,000 hits

I was about to shake my head wryly and give up the quote, but then a little voice said to me, “Get smart now, lad”:

Well done, Mervyn.

“Yes, that one just, just, erm, occurred to me right now when you came up on screen.” I shrugged and beamed at him. “Don’t ask me how. But I thought you’d be looking a little peakier, what with your recent infection and all that.”

He nodded. That cunning grin again. What was I missing here?

Now please, Merv, don’t go!

“I’m good, really, real good (I winced, but only inwardly). "And, hey, I would have gotten in touch earlier, because I know you were waiting for me on the Mexican wall thing to keep out all those rapists and smack merchants and no-good hombres, but then all this virus stuff and demos and riots everywhere came up, so the wall’s on hold now. But I might have another job for you. Maybe a couple of jobs. A personal one you could maybe help me out with, and then … well, fact is, I was wondering if you could help out getting me re-elected. A bit of help with speeches, that kind of thing." He threw out his hands. "I’m surrounded by assholes here, as you know.”

Diarist Exclusive

Earlier today a newbie diarist voiced his delight, his weariness and his pleasure through pain on finally achieving the coveted 100 K. The man some call the Crackpot Corona Chronicler washed out his mouth, replaced the toothbrush in the rack, and shared his thoughts with a misted-up mirror in an eerily silent bathroom:

Now, after the Mexican disappointment, things were looking up!

“Let us remember that the lonely work of a diarist is not about the diarist. Like Samuel Pepys, like Ann Frank, like Count Ciano, like Charles Pooter, like Adrian Mole, the diarist merely records the era thrust upon him or her by the fickle lottery of time. The difference now is that it is a diary about the whole world, a world stricken, wounded and on its knees. Despite our hardships, though, let us never forget that our world may be bloody, but it is surely unbowed. We shall overcome. God bless us every one.”

But, as we all know, it’s best to get the terms straight right from the get-go …

“Would that be for the same, er, 100 K?” I queried. “In a month?

Virtual thanks

100 K?

Serving you a virtual slice of pumpkin pie, in a nod to Thanksgiving which we are celebrating virtually, in appreciation of your efforts to document "the current situation".

One hundred thousand in a month?”

page-35

“Hey, sure,” laughed Don. “100 K it is. One hundred thousand. I never go back on a deal. 100 K, you got it.” He leaned back and stretched.

Local time: 09:36

I decided to throw him a bone. “For now, on the subject of your re-election campaign, I’ll tell you one thing for free. Don’t call it the Campaign to RE-Elect the President like Nixon did. Whoever heard of a serious campaign called “CREEP” for short?

Pumpkin pie

But what’s this personal thing?”

Never had it before, but I'll be enjoying it virtually with a non-virtual beer or two.

The big man was uncomfortable. He fiddled with his hands. “It’s Mel,” he said, finally. “I feel we’re growing apart. I think she’s getting fed up with the presidency. Which isn’t good news, considering I’m going for another term. She’s all moody. Her mom was the same. She gets more like her mother every day,” he sighed.

Many thanks!!

“Don’t fret, Don. It’s a fact of life,” I consoled him. “All women turn into their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That is his.”

Local time: 08:36

POTUS sat bolt upright. “Man, you have some repartee there. How do you think these things up?

You will survive!

Do you think I could, you know, use that line of yours myself?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hl3B4Ql8RtQ

That would go down a treat in a speech at one of those goddamn boring press dinners I have to host now and again.”

An anthem against the virus, but at the same time a song of encouragement to keep you with us.

It happened again. I was on the verge of mentioning Oscar Wilde, but then another little voice said to me - rather inappropriately considering the circumstances – “Yes we can, Mervyn”. So I just said, “Sure, use it if you like, Don. But, erm, just be sure you don’t attribute it specifically to me, that’s all. I’m, erm, kinda shy about these things.”

Many thanks to everyone, including Mervyn for dedicating part of his time to us here in these hard times!

The President was pleased now. “I knew you could help me out!

(I missed this celebration I took a nap literally)

We’ll deal with Mel later, though. So what about these elections?

Kanada

Not going too good, man. You saw the debate with Biden, right?”

Local time: 03:36

“Only parts of it,” I admitted. “Here it was on at 3 in the morning, you see. A real shouting match. But I think you had the edge angerwise, Don. You were livid.”

italština

“Pfff!” he grumped. “Hardly surprising. You mentioned Nixon just now, right?

Catchy tune!

Well, that bastard Nixoned me right before it.”

Oct 12

“Biden … Nixoned you?

But hey, no bagpipes???

What the …?”

Fiddle?

“Yeah, it’s a term someone in the White House team made up. Nixoning is, well, you remember that interview Nixon had with the British man Frost, don’t you?

Is this fiddle material, Alexandra?

They even made a film out of it some years ago. Yes, well, that was the high point in Frost’s career, it was the be all and end all for him, and for Nixon it was real important too, sure it was, think of all the shit that was going down just then, what with Vietnam and the race thing and all the pinkos and lefties running around burning up the streets and throwing bricks at the cops. So the two of them were sitting there in the studio just before they were called on set, and they were chatting, and Nixon was being real charming and all that, because he could be, you know, when he wasn’t organising burglaries and being a paranoid son of a bitch and so on, ha-ha, so he was asking how Frost was and had he slept well the night before, only seconds before they were due on, this was, just as the TV suits were approaching all servile to say “So, mm, shall we, gentlemen …?” and bring them on, and then suddenly out of nowhere Nixon asks Frost “And did you fornicate?”, and then of course Frost splutters and gasps, loses his concentration, they both walk out on set, and the interviewer’s jaw is down somewhere around his ankles and he’s a bag of nerves because he’s still in shock, whereas Nixon is smiling, calm and collected. Nixoning. It gives you the edge in an interview.”

It was played every night at 8 pm during the lockdown applause for most of March, April and May.

I had to laugh. “I can see that, naturally. But Biden didn’t ask you if you’d fornicated, did he?”

It seemed to be coming from the next block along.

“Oh no, he was smarter. Bidening’s a different kettle of fish altogether. Much more direct. It was the same setup, we were at the studio, about to go out to the lecterns, and were standing there in the wings, Sleepy Joe had Fancy Nancy Pelosi in tow for moral support as well, and then all of a sudden he says, all serious and deferential and polite: “You know, Mr President, politics apart, I realise there can be no doubt that you are working tremendously hard for our people, the people of this great country of ours, the men and women of America, and I admire you enormously in that capacity, as the unflinching and unswerving leader of our wonderful nation, and to demonstrate that, you see, I’ve brought you a little gift, just as a token of my respect, you understand."

There were a couple of young girls down a bit on the opposite side of the street who weren't there at the beginning of lockdown, but after a while they were always waiting on the balcony at five minutes to eight for the dance music to start.

"Now, where … where on earth … did I put it?” he says, frowning a little, like, and he pats his breast pocket, then he pats both his coat pockets, then he pats his pants pockets, and then he smiles and says “Ah yes, here it is, it’s in here,” and he puts his hand very slowly into one of the pockets, and takes it out very slowly too, never taking his eyes off me and grinning, and then he brings up his hand, and I’m looking at it and smiling too, because you smile when someone’s about to hand you a gift, right, and then I see there’s nothing there, and Biden he holds his hand up in front of me and gives me the finger just like that, to my face, you know, and then the both of them start to laugh and laugh and laugh and laugh at me like hyenas, just as the suits are coming over to take us to our places. And that Pelosi cow, she was going fricking apopletic, she was squealing “Oh, oh, I think I’m going to pee myself, oh God, I have, I have, I’m wetting myself here, oh sweet Jesus, where’s the ladies’ room already?”

Also much easier to dance to than La Macarena, without making a fool of yourself by screwing up all the movements.

The man on screen was grim. He bunched one hand into a fist and held it up.

A fiddle would indeed work better than bagpipes

“You know, I’d have landed one right on his nose, but I just couldn’t in the studio, of course. Good job, too, and I even think that’s exactly what the motherfricker wanted me to do, because then I would have been screwed for sure, much more than I am now. So I need your help on this, pal.” He punched the palm of his other hand with the fist a few times.

My apologies, I was unaware of the connection between this song and the role it's played in boosting morale.

“Crikey,” I breathed to myself (well, it was something a little stronger). “What am I getting myself into here?”

Great idea!

.

As far as I know we don't have such an anthem in Canada.

TO BE CONTINUED

It would be nice to think we don't need one but the angle of the curve seems to be indicating otherwise.

(if I learned anything from the Little Translator chronicles, it was not to try and put it all in at once, because it drives you crackers, believe me)

Yes, a fiddle would work quite well, you could play chords during the chorus, and perhaps a solo break here and there where a guitar would normally do that.

Laugh, lest we cry

Here's an example of fiddles incorporated nicely into a multi-piece band, playing an anthem-type tune, starting at 5:45 at the following link:

Sure glad you can find the humour in this scenario!!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98UTTboY7pM

Will be interesting to read about the "help" you provide POTUS!

Yes, more CanCon (Canadian content)!

I am very curious to know

Dancing Quarantine

Oct 9

Mervyn, I am sorry.

Let's see how will you help "Don" in his re-election, although he is being

Here's one that you will certainly like it!

images

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmDcg59Xzek

Spaniards in the works

Home alone III (the Nespresso Scenario)

The Princess of Darkness was as good as her word. She accepted Sánchez's measures because she had no choice, but she went to the courts meanwhile, and they overturned the decision. So suddenly 5 million people are no longer affected by restrictions in the capital now, and it's down to about 50,000 affected (a technicality - a couple of locations in the Madrid area were not included in the proceedings, a slip-up).

Oct 13

So Pedro says he might fight back and declare a state of alarm in Madrid anyway. Big argument ongoing everywhere. The only thing the politicians involved (and many uninvolved too, shouting from the sidelines at the ref, whoever that actually is, because there might be two or three of them) agree on is that it is much better to waste time arguing and holding press conferences than actually doing anything about Covid.

"So”, I resumed, “let’s see if we can’t solve a few problems for the President of the United States of America.”

Below, the unhappy couple. Note those frightening eyes on the right. Pedro's losing this stare-out.

He raised a hand.

https://www.vozpopuli.com/espana/reunion-sanchez-ayuso\_0\_1393061227.html

“Great.”

No sooner said ...

“Yes, right, now what I was thinking was …”

Oct 10

“No, I mean Great as in the President of the United States of Great America.

Tanks rumbling through the streets. Military might. Rifles, machine guns. Unsmiling policemen and soldiers on every corner. A population cowed by its rulers. That'll be what Pyongyang looks like today as Kim Young 'Un and his people celebrate 75 years of the Workers' Party.

We’re gonna change the name of the country.

Oh no, no, not the Spanish capital!

Make America great again and all that, you know.”

Did you think I meant Madrid?

Ah. The Offalburger comment that hadn’t rung true before was dawning on me now ...

No, silly, not quite like that in Madrid, but what a turnaround. Spain's Health Minister remarked tersely that, as the Presidentess had "decided to do nothing", there was no alternative but to declare a state of alarm again in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, in the format they all know by now but do not love. He added that there was "a limit to his patience", and even went so far as to lash out with "None so blind as those who will not see". So now we have direct rule of Madrid, you might say, by ... well, by Madrid actually, for at least 14 days, whereupon they need permish to do it again. Poor old madrileños. "... and madrileñas", as the socialists always quickly add.

“I see.”

Actually, my main reason for posting today, amid a load of twaddley weekend blaargh, is to apologise for the word "apopletic" in Home Alone II instead of "apoplectic", to describe Nancy Pelosi's sudden attack of laughter and

I thought about it.

Thanks for the spellcheck tip Oct 10

“Might be better as the Great United States of America.

I had no idea!

Flows better, I think.”

Will definitely run draft posts through Antidote in future!

But he shook his head.

Thank you for proofreading and taking good care of English language Oct 10

“Nope. We did consider that.

I didn't noticed until the moment my brain switched to the "Portuguese/Latin mode".

Or Offalskoffer did.

It is "apoplectic". We also wrote it with a "c" before the "t", but since the silly "Portuguese Language Orthographic Agreement of 1990" came into force a few years ago, now we use it without that consonant.

It was his idea.

Origins of the Latin language were lost by this spelling reform, which seems to not take good care of their speakers and language.

If we call it the Great United States of America, that would make me POTGUS, and POTGUS sounds like you’re cooking it for

This is no substitute and not much of a comfort...

Thanksgiving, so it’s gonna be the United States of Great America.

Oct 11

Like Johnson’s Great Britain in London, England.”

but, here cases are increasing more than ever.

“It does sound logical,”

We had a high number of infections yesterday in 24 hours (almost 1700 cases) and there is a significant lack of healthcare providers.

I agreed.

https://www.statista.com/statistics/1107359/coronavirus-cases-portugal-cumulative/

“Although, with all the unrest recently it’s not so much making America great again as breaking American pate again.”

Portugal and Spain refuse new border closure according to the latest Iberian summit.

He slumped back in his chair in despondency again.

I know this will end. Patience is a virtue and wisdom is a defence.

"Yep, depressing all right, all the rioting recently.

100,000 hits

And then there's Mel.

Well done, Mervyn.

I want to get her alone and just talk to her, but she just tosses her head all the time, and I don’t know how to approach her anymore.”

Now please, Merv, don’t go!

Do you know, as he got weaker, I got stronger.

Diarist Exclusive

I could feel a strange kind of boldness and arrogance coming on, like the contact was allowing me to soak up all that Trumpishness.

Earlier today a newbie diarist voiced his delight, his weariness and his pleasure through pain on finally achieving the coveted 100 K. The man some call the Crackpot Corona Chronicler washed out his mouth, replaced the toothbrush in the rack, and shared his thoughts with a misted-up mirror in an eerily silent bathroom:

As I watched him bow his head and slap the desk, I knew it was time to grasp the situation with both hands:

“Let us remember that the lonely work of a diarist is not about the diarist. Like Samuel Pepys, like Ann Frank, like Count Ciano, like Charles Pooter, like Adrian Mole, the diarist merely records the era thrust upon him or her by the fickle lottery of time. The difference now is that it is a diary about the whole world, a world stricken, wounded and on its knees. Despite our hardships, though, let us never forget that our world may be bloody, but it is surely unbowed. We shall overcome. God bless us every one.”

“Don,” I said firmly, “you’ve come to the right address, because I’ve fooled a few women in my time.”

Virtual thanks

I grimaced.

Serving you a virtual slice of pumpkin pie, in a nod to Thanksgiving which we are celebrating virtually, in appreciation of your efforts to document "the current situation".

“OK, OK, more than a few have fooled me too, and every last one of them rumbled me in the end, but in the short to medium term, mostly the short, I know what I’m doing here.”

page-35

I wrinkled my brow and thought hard:

Local time: 09:36

“It’s coming to me now … right, now, you’ve got to make preparations for this, Donald.

Pumpkin pie

Make sure, yes, make sure you’re in the Oval Office, just the two of you, that’s important.

Never had it before, but I'll be enjoying it virtually with a non-virtual beer or two.

And … this is something Offalskoffer or someone can sort out for you - you have to have a special switch or something on the desk, so that you can call up a special song for this, and the song is How you like me now?

Many thanks!!

By an outfit called The Heavy.

Local time: 08:36

Has to be ready to play the second you throw the switch, got it?”

You will survive!

He nodded up and down, open-mouthed.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hl3B4Ql8RtQ

Bloody Nora, I was getting into this, and no mistake:

An anthem against the virus, but at the same time a song of encouragement to keep you with us.

“… but first, talk to her, you say you have to talk to her, first you have to talk, so, let’s see, let’s see, talk to her, talk, yes, talk the talk, so … you want to get her on side right away next time you’re alone, and yes, oh yes, I see it all now.”

Many thanks to everyone, including Mervyn for dedicating part of his time to us here in these hard times!

I was looking off to the side for inspiration, but I could see him edging forward in his seat, reaching for pen and paper.

(I missed this celebration I took a nap literally)

“So you want to get her smiling, smiling, smile, yes, smile, that’s crucial, so you could start off with something like, er, let’s see if I’ve got this right, yes, so you’re both standing by the desk in the office, and you say “Mel”, and you stand there and put your hands ever so gently and tenderly on her shoulders, and then you say …”

Kanada

(how the hell did it go, I wondered, oh yes, got it …):

Local time: 03:36

“Smile, an everlasting smile, a smile can bring you near to me …””

italština

I looked up, and he was busy writing.

Catchy tune!

“Then you go on with, er,

Oct 12

“Don’t ever let me find you down, … “‘cos that would bring a tear to me.”

But hey, no bagpipes???

Yes, and it rhymes, too, so that’s good.

Fiddle?

Right, and, and then …” …

Is this fiddle material, Alexandra?

“Mel, this world has lost its glory, let’s start a brand new story now, … my love”, erm, and then “Right now, there’ll be no other time”, mm, “and I can show you how, my love …”

It was played every night at 8 pm during the lockdown applause for most of March, April and May.

Still busy writing, nodding, tongue out the side of his mouth.

It seemed to be coming from the next block along.

It was going better than I’d hoped.

There were a couple of young girls down a bit on the opposite side of the street who weren't there at the beginning of lockdown, but after a while they were always waiting on the balcony at five minutes to eight for the dance music to start.

I went on talking like a man possessed.

Also much easier to dance to than La Macarena, without making a fool of yourself by screwing up all the movements.

“And then … “Talk in everlasting words, and dedicate them all to me” … yes, and then it’s

A fiddle would indeed work better than bagpipes

“And I will give you all my life.

My apologies, I was unaware of the connection between this song and the role it's played in boosting morale.

I’m here if you should call to me.”

Great idea!

“And then you just take her in your arms, your strong, manly, presidential arms, and say, “Melania, Mel, you think that I don’t even mean a single word I say.

As far as I know we don't have such an anthem in Canada.

It’s only words.

It would be nice to think we don't need one but the angle of the curve seems to be indicating otherwise.

But words are all I have, to, er, take your heart away.”

Yes, a fiddle would work quite well, you could play chords during the chorus, and perhaps a solo break here and there where a guitar would normally do that.

How we doing, Don?”

Here's an example of fiddles incorporated nicely into a multi-piece band, playing an anthem-type tune, starting at 5:45 at the following link:

Bloody hell, I was even beginning to talk like him …

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98UTTboY7pM

“Hey, that’s A-OK, man.

Yes, more CanCon (Canadian content)!

That’ll go down a …”

Dancing Quarantine

“Just a minute, just a second, there’s more, you’ve just said you had Words, so you have to follow through with more Words.” God, I was definitely warming to it now.

Mervyn, I am sorry.

What the hell was the matter with me?

Here's one that you will certainly like it!

I’d created a monster.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmDcg59Xzek

“Then, then you move in softly, and you kind of tilt her down a little over the desk, you know, in that kind of swooning move the bloke does with the girl during a tango

Home alone III (the Nespresso Scenario)

(I curved my hands and leaned to one side to illustrate),

Oct 13

hold her there so her face is inches from yours, look straight into her eyes and say very calmly and firmly,

"So”, I resumed, “let’s see if we can’t solve a few problems for the President of the United States of America.”

“You are the First Lady.

He raised a hand.

And I am The Man. Whenever you reach for me, er, I’ll do all that I can.

“Great.”

We’re heading … yes, we’re heading for something, er, somewhere that I’ve never been.

“Yes, right, now what I was thinking was …”

Sometimes I am frightened, but, mm, I am ready to learn … of The Power of Love.”

“No, I mean Great as in the President of the United States of Great America.

“And say it like that, too, The Power of Love, in capitals,” I added.

We’re gonna change the name of the country.

“Capitals?

Make America great again and all that, you know.”

How the hecking heck can I say it …. ah, hey, joke, right, man?”

Ah. The Offalburger comment that hadn’t rung true before was dawning on me now ...

“Sorry, yes,” I apologised.

“I see.”

“It’s a thing I have.

I thought about it.

Can’t help it.”

“Might be better as the Great United States of America.

“Way to go!” he enthused.

Flows better, I think.”

“The Power of Love. Right on!”

But he shook his head.

At that point I remembered just whom I was talking to.

“Nope. We did consider that.

“You could swap that last bit for “The Love of Power” if you like, too.

Or Offalskoffer did.

Kind of fits the situation, if you don’t mind me saying so.

It was his idea.

The downside is that it files away most of that romantic edge.”

If we call it the Great United States of America, that would make me POTGUS, and POTGUS sounds like you’re cooking it for

“And so,” I went on eagerly, “picture the scene, Don, picture the scene as one of the most powerful men in the entire world

Thanksgiving, so it’s gonna be the United States of Great America.

(and then, because I could see the beginnings of a scowl there) …

Like Johnson’s Great Britain in London, England.”

THE most powerful man in the entire world, I mean, holding the First Lady, a beautiful former model, over a desk at the White House, reaches over and throws that music switch.”

“It does sound logical,”

“Got it, got it, man.

I agreed.

And then?

“Although, with all the unrest recently it’s not so much making America great again as breaking American pate again.”

What do I do then?”

He slumped back in his chair in despondency again.

“Then?

"Yep, depressing all right, all the rioting recently.

Then?

And then there's Mel.

Then, Don, there would be what George Clooney would call a Nespresso Moment.”

I want to get her alone and just talk to her, but she just tosses her head all the time, and I don’t know how to approach her anymore.”

He shook his head.

Do you know, as he got weaker, I got stronger.

“Don’t follow you there.

I could feel a strange kind of boldness and arrogance coming on, like the contact was allowing me to soak up all that Trumpishness.

Nespresso Moment?”

As I watched him bow his head and slap the desk, I knew it was time to grasp the situation with both hands:

“What that means, Don, and pardon my French, is that you then proceed to roger her six ways from Sunday.

“Don,” I said firmly, “you’ve come to the right address, because I’ve fooled a few women in my time.”

What else?”

I grimaced.

Phew.

“OK, OK, more than a few have fooled me too, and every last one of them rumbled me in the end, but in the short to medium term, mostly the short, I know what I’m doing here.”

I was breathing a little heavily by now.

I wrinkled my brow and thought hard:

Looking up, I could see he was too.

“It’s coming to me now … right, now, you’ve got to make preparations for this, Donald.

Had I gone too far?

Make sure, yes, make sure you’re in the Oval Office, just the two of you, that’s important.

Would the next sounds I heard be a sudden roar of engines outside the building, reducing to the dull monotone fla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla of the blades of a helicopter hovering in mid-air, the smashing of glass as two Seals in full combat gear, faces smeared in animal droppings and nostrils still eagerly flared even after all these years with the smell of Bin Laden’s blood, came crashing through the window, dropping to the ground and rolling, whilst another two blew open the front door in a minutely planned two-pronged attack?

And … this is something Offalskoffer or someone can sort out for you - you have to have a special switch or something on the desk, so that you can call up a special song for this, and the song is How you like me now?

I wasn’t scared for myself, though.

By an outfit called The Heavy.

It was the Basques I was worried about.

Has to be ready to play the second you throw the switch, got it?”

I could just see them, pressed up against the wall, screaming:

He nodded up and down, open-mouthed.

“We know what you’re here for, so just take it, take it, will you, and leave us be!

Bloody Nora, I was getting into this, and no mistake:

But you’ll have to tie up the fish pan on the stove with cord and take the cod as-is, because bacalao a la vizcaína and tupperware just don’t mix.

“… but first, talk to her, you say you have to talk to her, first you have to talk, so, let’s see, let’s see, talk to her, talk, yes, talk the talk, so … you want to get her on side right away next time you’re alone, and yes, oh yes, I see it all now.”

It’s the tomato, don’t you get it?

I was looking off to the side for inspiration, but I could see him edging forward in his seat, reaching for pen and paper.

Hake in green parsley and garlic sauce is fine, you can do what you like with it, with or without the clams, but tell the pilot to look sharp, because either of them start to go off at altitudes of over five hundred feet …”

“So you want to get her smiling, smiling, smile, yes, smile, that’s crucial, so you could start off with something like, er, let’s see if I’ve got this right, yes, so you’re both standing by the desk in the office, and you say “Mel”, and you stand there and put your hands ever so gently and tenderly on her shoulders, and then you say …”

What is it with the Basques?

(how the hell did it go, I wondered, oh yes, got it …):

Why does it all relate to food?

“Smile, an everlasting smile, a smile can bring you near to me …””

You say Good morning, and they say Ah!

I looked up, and he was busy writing.

Nothing like our little green Gernika peppers.

“Then you go on with, er,

You ask What time is it, and they say I’ll stick my neck out for Tolosa beans against all comers.

“Don’t ever let me find you down, … “‘cos that would bring a tear to me.”

You say Better get going for my appointment with the doctor, and they say Baby squid should always be cooked gently, never rushed.

Yes, and it rhymes, too, so that’s good.

And if it’s not food, there they are, chopping away with an axe at the huge log of wood they’re standing on, or sawing an even huger log between two of them back and forth, or lifting 300+ kg stones up and down, or standing on a stage, hands in pockets, singing out their amusing spontaneous “bertso” rhymes in Euskera.

Right, and, and then …” …

But it was just a momentary picture going through my mind, as I bowed my head, expecting the worst.

“Mel, this world has lost its glory, let’s start a brand new story now, … my love”, erm, and then “Right now, there’ll be no other time”, mm, “and I can show you how, my love …”

When I looked up, the President was sitting there staring at me, drumming the desk with those big fingers.

Still busy writing, nodding, tongue out the side of his mouth.

Finally he spoke.

It was going better than I’d hoped.

Just one word:

I went on talking like a man possessed.

“Roger …”

“And then … “Talk in everlasting words, and dedicate them all to me” … yes, and then it’s

Well, I knew he’d understood, but I babbled anyway:

“And I will give you all my life.

“Yes, it might not be used much Stateside, the verb to roger, but it’s rather popular where I come from.

I’m here if you should call to me.”

It … it means …”

“And then you just take her in your arms, your strong, manly, presidential arms, and say, “Melania, Mel, you think that I don’t even mean a single word I say.

He cut me off right away.

It’s only words.

Jaw set and raising up that arrogant chin of his, you know the way he does:

But words are all I have, to, er, take your heart away.”

“Oh, I know what roger means, pal.”

How we doing, Don?”

He paused.

Bloody hell, I was even beginning to talk like him …

I half-turned in my chair to look at the window behind me.

“Hey, that’s A-OK, man.

“Any second now,” I thought.

That’ll go down a …”

Then he spoke again:

“Just a minute, just a second, there’s more, you’ve just said you had Words, so you have to follow through with more Words.” God, I was definitely warming to it now.

“But it means something else too, doesn’t it?”

What the hell was the matter with me?

My brow furrowed. “Er, … something else?”

I’d created a monster.

“Sure it does.”

“Then, then you move in softly, and you kind of tilt her down a little over the desk, you know, in that kind of swooning move the bloke does with the girl during a tango

There was a twinkle in his eye now.

(I curved my hands and leaned to one side to illustrate),

“It means, like, “OK”, “over and out”.

hold her there so her face is inches from yours, look straight into her eyes and say very calmly and firmly,

Understood.

“You are the First Lady.

Roger.

And I am The Man. Whenever you reach for me, er, I’ll do all that I can.

I get it, I get it.

We’re heading … yes, we’re heading for something, er, somewhere that I’ve never been.

You’re on the team, pal.

Sometimes I am frightened, but, mm, I am ready to learn … of The Power of Love.”

You’re so on the team.

“And say it like that, too, The Power of Love, in capitals,” I added.

You.

“Capitals?

Are.

How the hecking heck can I say it …. ah, hey, joke, right, man?”

So.

“Sorry, yes,” I apologised.

On.

“It’s a thing I have.

The.

Can’t help it.”

Team.

“Way to go!” he enthused.

I got this, I do.

“The Power of Love. Right on!”

Yowser!

At that point I remembered just whom I was talking to.

I done got it for sure, I’ll tell the world.

“You could swap that last bit for “The Love of Power” if you like, too.

I know what I have to do about that now.

Kind of fits the situation, if you don’t mind me saying so.

So what can we do about these darned elections ...?”

The downside is that it files away most of that romantic edge.”

CREDITS:

“And so,” I went on eagerly, “picture the scene, Don, picture the scene as one of the most powerful men in the entire world

Bee Gees

(and then, because I could see the beginnings of a scowl there) …

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hGyrNChk5c

THE most powerful man in the entire world, I mean, holding the First Lady, a beautiful former model, over a desk at the White House, reaches over and throws that music switch.”

Jennifer Rush

“Got it, got it, man.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiFre0FK-s0

And then?

The Heavy

What do I do then?”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVzvRsl4rEM

“Then?

Mal de muchos ...

Then?

... consuelo de tontos.

Then, Don, there would be what George Clooney would call a Nespresso Moment.”

As they say.

He shook his head.

It's always rather comforting but idiotic to find out that someone's in the same plight as you.

“Don’t follow you there.

And it looks like that Second Wave is rising up in France, the UK, Portugal, Germany, the Netherlands ... everywhere.

Nespresso Moment?”

So that's a very, very, very small hooray.

“What that means, Don, and pardon my French, is that you then proceed to roger her six ways from Sunday.

I'm getting mighty tired of the sea of face masks, even though, like most people here, I probably spend much less time than others in Bilbao out and about seeing all those masks.

What else?”

On the other hand, that could be the reason I notice them much more, and if I were taking the metro and doing a lot of walking around, I would get so used to them I wouldn't even notice.

Phew.

Like in the Blues Brothers film, when two or three inner-city trains roar past in quick succession outside the miserable Chicago bedsit Elwood Blues brings his brother Jake to when he gets out of prison, and the entire bedsit shudders:

I was breathing a little heavily by now.

Jake: "So how often does the train go past?"

Looking up, I could see he was too.

Elwood: "So often you won't even notice."

Had I gone too far?

Scaled-down version of the "Hispanidad" public holiday yesterday - a mini military parade in Madrid with the King and Queen and daughters in attendance.

Would the next sounds I heard be a sudden roar of engines outside the building, reducing to the dull monotone fla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla of the blades of a helicopter hovering in mid-air, the smashing of glass as two Seals in full combat gear, faces smeared in animal droppings and nostrils still eagerly flared even after all these years with the smell of Bin Laden’s blood, came crashing through the window, dropping to the ground and rolling, whilst another two blew open the front door in a minutely planned two-pronged attack?

Plus a motley crew on the sidelines heckling against Sánchez and Co.

I wasn’t scared for myself, though.

And a rather embarrassing flyover at the event by a row of air force fighter planes, with vapour trails in the colours of the Spanish flag, except that one of them was trailing white vapour instead of yellow, which spoiled it a little.

It was the Basques I was worried about.

I also saw on TV that a soldier parachuted into the square too, but smashed into a tree on the way down.

I could just see them, pressed up against the wall, screaming:

Not sure now if that was yesterday, or footage from last year. Last year's parade, though, definitely featured another mishap - another paratrooper's initially heroic descent with flags and all, which started off gloriously, but finished ingloriously.

“We know what you’re here for, so just take it, take it, will you, and leave us be!

Still, they did applaud him last year:

But you’ll have to tie up the fish pan on the stove with cord and take the cod as-is, because bacalao a la vizcaína and tupperware just don’t mix.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diRGsLWfPhM

It’s the tomato, don’t you get it?

Candid camera?

Hake in green parsley and garlic sauce is fine, you can do what you like with it, with or without the clams, but tell the pilot to look sharp, because either of them start to go off at altitudes of over five hundred feet …”

I thought it was a candid camera "parashooting".

What is it with the Basques?

In this second wave, I hope we can be much better equipped to deal with this "bug"... but I am tired, so many efforts and commitments for nothing.

Why does it all relate to food?

Home alone IV (ghosts of the past)

You say Good morning, and they say Ah!

Oct 14

Nothing like our little green Gernika peppers.

... And so I turned my mind to helping POTUS out with his re-election.

You ask What time is it, and they say I’ll stick my neck out for Tolosa beans against all comers.

Still and all, I had to admit it wasn’t looking good for him:

You say Better get going for my appointment with the doctor, and they say Baby squid should always be cooked gently, never rushed.

“It’s a toughie, Mr Trump.

And if it’s not food, there they are, chopping away with an axe at the huge log of wood they’re standing on, or sawing an even huger log between two of them back and forth, or lifting 300+ kg stones up and down, or standing on a stage, hands in pockets, singing out their amusing spontaneous “bertso” rhymes in Euskera.

Plus they’re wondering about your health now, whether you’re up to the job.”

But it was just a momentary picture going through my mind, as I bowed my head, expecting the worst.

That elicited a bitter laugh.

When I looked up, the President was sitting there staring at me, drumming the desk with those big fingers.

“Well, that one backfired on me for sure.

Finally he spoke.

Know what?

Just one word:

I don’t even have the bug.

“Roger …”

Neither does Mel.

Well, I knew he’d understood, but I babbled anyway:

I never did.

“Yes, it might not be used much Stateside, the verb to roger, but it’s rather popular where I come from.

Neither did she.

It … it means …”

Fake noos,” he guffawed, “only it didn’t work.”

He cut me off right away.

The things you hear about direct from the shadowy corridors of power.

Jaw set and raising up that arrogant chin of his, you know the way he does:

My quizzical look told him some kind of explanation was required:

“Oh, I know what roger means, pal.”

“It was a PR thing.

He paused.

It was looking too much like Slimy Joe might have a chance of slithering his way into the presidency with that Camel woman.

I half-turned in my chair to look at the window behind me.

Well, she’s a capable girl all right, I must say.

“Any second now,” I thought.

Dangerously capable.

Then he spoke again:

Especially when you line her up against my Mikey.

“But it means something else too, doesn’t it?”

Little Mike’s all I’ve got, but what can I say, he’s a bit of a Boy Scout.

My brow furrowed. “Er, … something else?”

No backbone,” he added, rolling his eyes.

“Sure it does.”

“So one of the brainstormers came up with the Covid scenario.

There was a twinkle in his eye now.

We leak some terrible news.

“It means, like, “OK”, “over and out”.

The stricken President, get it?

Understood.

The stricken First Lady.

Roger.

Both of them stricken.

I get it, I get it.

A whole lot of strickening going on.

You’re on the team, pal.

Then they spin all the heroic guff about me staying at the helm of the nation despite serious illness, right before the elections.

You’re so on the team.

Remember that squad of doctors reporting on me?

You.

Only one of them was actually a doctor, the one at the front, so he could do the medical blurb, but the rest were all actors.

Are.

Clint Eastwood rounded them up for me, because I can count on Clint.

So.

Now there’s an all-American guy.

On.

A patriot.

The.

You can’t ask the likes of moody old De Niro or that un-American traitor Clooney, of course.

Team.

Or Martin Sheen either.”

I got this, I do.

“Oh, most especially not Martin Sheen,” I agreed.

Yowser!

“They say he got so into playing a Democrat President in The West Wing he got to thinking he WAS the President.

I done got it for sure, I’ll tell the world.

It’s understandable – you have the best suit during filming, you have the best lines, the best bubbly, the best of everything - you walk in on set, all the other actors and actresses stand up and says Good morning, Mr President;

I know what I have to do about that now.

you walk out, everyone stands up and says Good night, Mr President;

So what can we do about these darned elections ...?”

you give somebody something - even if it’s the empty mug of coffee he brought you half an hour ago for him to take it away again like the skivvy he is - they say Thank you, Mr President;

CREDITS:

or somebody gives you something, and even then they say This is my way of saying thank you, Mr President, for taking care of my country, your country and our country;

Bee Gees

you’re looking downhearted, your PA says Don’t worry, Mr President, remember that the day is darkest before the dawn;

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hGyrNChk5c

you’re fretting about the reaction of the Commies, and your Chief of Staff says, Mr President, that guy might be the Commies’ President, but that don’t mean no more’n a hill of beans to us, Mr President, because, hot diggity, Mr President Sir, you’re OUR President, Sir, and doggone it, Sir, that’s all that matters to us, Mr President, Sir.

Jennifer Rush

Then Martin walks off set at the end of the day, slips on a dog turd in the street, gets shouted at by a bag woman, has to slum it home in the shitty stench of a smelly subway with the rest of them, and on the way his wife rings to tell him Charlie’s been a prat again, and she’s sending him back into detox.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiFre0FK-s0

But most of the time Sheen thought he actually was POTUS, and he ended up with the delusion that nobody could do it better than him, especially a Republican President, and most especially … “

The Heavy

I trailed off as I saw a shadow pass over his face.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVzvRsl4rEM

His jaw rose a little, but it was only a kind of knee-jerk reaction with him, hearing something he didn’t like, and that jaw went straight down again, he stared at me, and then exhaled slowly and sadly.

Mal de muchos ...

“Yes, you can say it, it’s OK.

... consuelo de tontos.

Especially the likes of me, right?

As they say.

Yep, for sure.

It's always rather comforting but idiotic to find out that someone's in the same plight as you.

And that’s why I thought I could get in a little edge with the fake virus thing.”

And it looks like that Second Wave is rising up in France, the UK, Portugal, Germany, the Netherlands ... everywhere.

I decided to give him a little reality shot.

So that's a very, very, very small hooray.

“The thing is, Don,” I said slowly, “someone who pooh-poohed the virus for so long isn’t about to garner much of that hero worship now he’s got it himself.

I'm getting mighty tired of the sea of face masks, even though, like most people here, I probably spend much less time than others in Bilbao out and about seeing all those masks.

Even though he hasn’t got it.

On the other hand, that could be the reason I notice them much more, and if I were taking the metro and doing a lot of walking around, I would get so used to them I wouldn't even notice.

Maybe it’s time for a little introspection on your part,

Like in the Blues Brothers film, when two or three inner-city trains roar past in quick succession outside the miserable Chicago bedsit Elwood Blues brings his brother Jake to when he gets out of prison, and the entire bedsit shudders:

And if you don’t know what introspection is, then maybe it’s time to take a long hard look at yourself.”

Jake: "So how often does the train go past?"

He gave a wry smile and nodded (well, that one fell flat, didn’t it?

Elwood: "So often you won't even notice."

…).

Scaled-down version of the "Hispanidad" public holiday yesterday - a mini military parade in Madrid with the King and Queen and daughters in attendance.

“Yep, I’m against the ropes all right.

Plus a motley crew on the sidelines heckling against Sánchez and Co.

It’s kind of a spiral.

And a rather embarrassing flyover at the event by a row of air force fighter planes, with vapour trails in the colours of the Spanish flag, except that one of them was trailing white vapour instead of yellow, which spoiled it a little.

It all started with my arrogance and my attitude to women, all the talk about the women I’ve been with, too.

I also saw on TV that a soldier parachuted into the square too, but smashed into a tree on the way down.

I could handle that.

Not sure now if that was yesterday, or footage from last year. Last year's parade, though, definitely featured another mishap - another paratrooper's initially heroic descent with flags and all, which started off gloriously, but finished ingloriously.

Got a little stormy a while back there, but most of that’s water under the bridge now.”

Still, they did applaud him last year:

I had to smile. “Stormy?” I thought.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diRGsLWfPhM

“I heard he got more than a little Stormy.

Candid camera?

The way I heard it, he got all of her. Several times.”

I thought it was a candid camera "parashooting".

But I thought I’d let that one go …

In this second wave, I hope we can be much better equipped to deal with this "bug"... but I am tired, so many efforts and commitments for nothing.

He was still musing.

Home alone IV (ghosts of the past)

“I suppose you could say I paid the price for that (hmm, yes you did, about 130 grand, wasn’t it?), but nowadays they’re all on my back about police brutality against negroes, this virus and my taxes, or lack of them.

Oct 14

I have the charisma, but it’s a kind of negative charisma sometimes, and I can feel it fading.

... And so I turned my mind to helping POTUS out with his re-election.

If I was a bit younger, if we were living in different times, if I had broad popular support in times of change. Like Kennedy, you know ...”

Still and all, I had to admit it wasn’t looking good for him:

Suddenly I could feel something stirring in my brain.

“It’s a toughie, Mr Trump.

The hair on the back of my neck began to rise.

Plus they’re wondering about your health now, whether you’re up to the job.”

Could it be …?

That elicited a bitter laugh.

Surely not.

“Well, that one backfired on me for sure.

Not after all these years.

Know what?

I stretched my neck up and rolled my head around.

I don’t even have the bug.

“What … did you just say, Don?”

Neither does Mel.

“I said, like Kennedy, I wish I could be like Kennedy.

I never did.

He was a Democrat, sure, but if only I could be like him.

Neither did she.

Yeah, like Kennedy.

Fake noos,” he guffawed, “only it didn’t work.”

Say, you OK over there?”

The things you hear about direct from the shadowy corridors of power.

“Don’t worry, Mr President,” I said, breathing hard.

My quizzical look told him some kind of explanation was required:

“Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.”

“It was a PR thing.

I could see him leaning forward.

It was looking too much like Slimy Joe might have a chance of slithering his way into the presidency with that Camel woman.

“What the hell’s gotten into you?

Well, she’s a capable girl all right, I must say.

All I said was like Kennedy.”

Dangerously capable.

“Yes,” I finally growled. “Oh, yes indeed. Like Kennedy.

Especially when you line her up against my Mikey.

Like John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Little Mike’s all I’ve got, but what can I say, he’s a bit of a Boy Scout.

Like JFK ...”

No backbone,” he added, rolling his eyes.

And just like that, the wavies were back:

“So one of the brainstormers came up with the Covid scenario.

DJT

We leak some terrible news.

I volunteer for the grassy knoll

The stricken President, get it?

Fake noos, huh?

The stricken First Lady.

Well that explains why he's been let loose on the public before a normal isolation period would even be over.

Both of them stricken.

Hot diggity indeed!

A whole lot of strickening going on.

Diggity

Then they spin all the heroic guff about me staying at the helm of the nation despite serious illness, right before the elections.

Thanks for that spelling correction, Alexandra.

Remember that squad of doctors reporting on me?

This time it did come up in the spell check, but since I had no idea I just let it pass.

Only one of them was actually a doctor, the one at the front, so he could do the medical blurb, but the rest were all actors.

Maybe I should have used "tagnabbit" instead.

Clint Eastwood rounded them up for me, because I can count on Clint.

As for grassy knoll duty, Chris, I'll keep you posted.

Now there’s an all-American guy.

Keep your powder dry.

A patriot.

Did you mean "dagnabbit"?

You can’t ask the likes of moody old De Niro or that un-American traitor Clooney, of course.

Meanwhile I corrected some grammatical errors that snuck in to my post...

Or Martin Sheen either.”

Dagnabbit

“Oh, most especially not Martin Sheen,” I agreed.

I probably did mean that.

“They say he got so into playing a Democrat President in The West Wing he got to thinking he WAS the President.

Comes of not being a native speaker ...

It’s understandable – you have the best suit during filming, you have the best lines, the best bubbly, the best of everything - you walk in on set, all the other actors and actresses stand up and says Good morning, Mr President;

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page36.html

you walk out, everyone stands up and says Good night, Mr President;

Local time: 10:29

you give somebody something - even if it’s the empty mug of coffee he brought you half an hour ago for him to take it away again like the skivvy he is - they say Thank you, Mr President;

No sooner said than done...

or somebody gives you something, and even then they say This is my way of saying thank you, Mr President, for taking care of my country, your country and our country;

Our Prime Minister declared today the "state of calamity" in the country due to the "serious evolution" of the pandemic.

you’re looking downhearted, your PA says Don’t worry, Mr President, remember that the day is darkest before the dawn;

The country crossed the barrier of two thousand daily cases.

you’re fretting about the reaction of the Commies, and your Chief of Staff says, Mr President, that guy might be the Commies’ President, but that don’t mean no more’n a hill of beans to us, Mr President, because, hot diggity, Mr President Sir, you’re OUR President, Sir, and doggone it, Sir, that’s all that matters to us, Mr President, Sir.

We can be also forced to use facial masks on the streets.

Then Martin walks off set at the end of the day, slips on a dog turd in the street, gets shouted at by a bag woman, has to slum it home in the shitty stench of a smelly subway with the rest of them, and on the way his wife rings to tell him Charlie’s been a prat again, and she’s sending him back into detox.

And here are other measures we need to follow:

But most of the time Sheen thought he actually was POTUS, and he ended up with the delusion that nobody could do it better than him, especially a Republican President, and most especially … “

https://www.plataformamedia.com/en/2020/10/14/portugal-returns-to-the-state-of-calamity-use-of-mask-on-public-roads-recommended/

I trailed off as I saw a shadow pass over his face.

I wonder when will this plague end in the world...

His jaw rose a little, but it was only a kind of knee-jerk reaction with him, hearing something he didn’t like, and that jaw went straight down again, he stared at me, and then exhaled slowly and sadly.

Ok, let's stay positive and bring some joy, laughter, and smiles with children.

“Yes, you can say it, it’s OK.

I have found this old interview (probably some of you have already watched) about Donald Trump:

Especially the likes of me, right?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYviM5xevC8

Yep, for sure.

Local time: 11:29

And that’s why I thought I could get in a little edge with the fake virus thing.”

Calamity

I decided to give him a little reality shot.

I noticed that, expressisverbis, on the news tonight.

“The thing is, Don,” I said slowly, “someone who pooh-poohed the virus for so long isn’t about to garner much of that hero worship now he’s got it himself.

They said that "calamity" in Spanish, which struck me as odd.

Even though he hasn’t got it.

Is a calamity the same as an alarm, like we have here?

Maybe it’s time for a little introspection on your part,

Some European Union!

And if you don’t know what introspection is, then maybe it’s time to take a long hard look at yourself.”

We can't even use the same terms for a huge, frightening, chaotic balls-up.

He gave a wry smile and nodded (well, that one fell flat, didn’t it?

The positive side is that this time we all know what it means, with none of the previous mystery.

…).

Great Trump video!

“Yep, I’m against the ropes all right.

I hadn't seen it before.

It’s kind of a spiral.

Kids (and drunks) always tell the truth.

It all started with my arrogance and my attitude to women, all the talk about the women I’ve been with, too.

"States of Confusion"

I could handle that.

It seems we have 4 states from the less to the most serious: State of Alert, State of Contingency, State of Calamity and State of Emergency.

Got a little stormy a while back there, but most of that’s water under the bridge now.”

I am going to try to translate their definitions from what I read in a newspaper:

I had to smile. “Stormy?” I thought.

Alert:

“I heard he got more than a little Stormy.

It is the lowest state, it represents a less serious and therefore less limiting situation.

The way I heard it, he got all of her. Several times.”

This means that "the means of civil protection and the security forces and services are in readiness" to restore order.

But I thought I’d let that one go …

Contingency:

He was still musing.

This state requires people to take preventive measures, such as limiting gatherings or short hours in shops.

“I suppose you could say I paid the price for that (hmm, yes you did, about 130 grand, wasn’t it?), but nowadays they’re all on my back about police brutality against negroes, this virus and my taxes, or lack of them.

The measures taken by municipalities to deal with the situation must be articulated and coordinated with civil protection authorities at national level.

I have the charisma, but it’s a kind of negative charisma sometimes, and I can feel it fading.

Calamity:

If I was a bit younger, if we were living in different times, if I had broad popular support in times of change. Like Kennedy, you know ...”

The law states that may impose restrictions on the movement or residence of persons, other living beings or vehicles, and it can be applied for reasons of the safety of people or operations.

Suddenly I could feel something stirring in my brain.

It is also legal to form "sanitary and safety fences"; establish of limits or restrictions to the movement of persons, other living beings or vehicles, submit to collective controls to prevent the spread of epidemic outbreaks, as per the "Basic Law of Civil Protection".

The hair on the back of my neck began to rise.

Emergency:

Could it be …?

An extreme measure of limitation of citizens' rights, freedoms and guarantees, which is why it is provided for in the Constitution and may imply forced quarantine and isolation for all.

Surely not.

Several fundamental rights can be denied, such as the right of movement, strike, or demonstration.

Not after all these years.

According to the law, only certain fundamental rights cannot be suspended (the right to life, personal integrity, personal identity, civil capacity and citizenship, the non-retroactivity of criminal law, the right of defence of the accused and freedom of conscience and religion).

I stretched my neck up and rolled my head around.

Only the President can declare a State of Emergency, a decision which must be approved by the Assembly of the Republic, after hearing the Government.

“What … did you just say, Don?”

And last, but not least, we also have a 5th State:

“I said, like Kennedy, I wish I could be like Kennedy.

It is called the "State of Siege":

He was a Democrat, sure, but if only I could be like him.

The State of Siege can only be declared in the event of effective or imminent aggression by foreign forces, serious threat, or in situations where the sovereignty, independence, integrity of the territory or the democratic constitutional order are called into question.

Yeah, like Kennedy.

To be honest, I had to make my research, because I was confused by all those states.

Say, you OK over there?”

The "Alarma" Spanish state is the equivalent to the Portuguese "Alerta" (Alert) state.

“Don’t worry, Mr President,” I said, breathing hard.

Please check it here:

“Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.”

"¿Qué es el estado de alarma?

I could see him leaning forward.

El estado de alarma es el más leve de los tres estados excepcionales (alarma, excepción y sitio) y está previsto para grandes catástrofes, crisis sanitarias o paralizaciones graves de los servicios públicos como consecuencia de huelgas o conflictos laborales."

“What the hell’s gotten into you?

https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20201009/estado-de-alarma-que-es-madrid-7888430

All I said was like Kennedy.”

Oh, that is so true!

“Yes,” I finally growled. “Oh, yes indeed. Like Kennedy.

Children and drunks are pure persons!

Like John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

You may find several errors, so please correct them.

Like JFK ...”

I was writing this while my cat was destroying my flat...!

And just like that, the wavies were back:

Thanks

DJT

Home alone V (Let the word go out from this day forth)

I volunteer for the grassy knoll

Oct 15

Fake noos, huh?

[for those unfamiliar with the “wavies” at the end last time, you have to imagine we’re moving into fantasy or flashback mode, like on the TV or during films when the screen goes wavy and people’s voices go all echoey] …

Well that explains why he's been let loose on the public before a normal isolation period would even be over.

“Double, double toil and trouble

Hot diggity indeed!

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble

Diggity

Hear ye now our prophecy

Thanks for that spelling correction, Alexandra.

A tragic tale of brethren three

This time it did come up in the spell check, but since I had no idea I just let it pass.

Of the Kennedy clan, of love and hate

Maybe I should have used "tagnabbit" instead.

Of plots a-hatching and loathsome fate

As for grassy knoll duty, Chris, I'll keep you posted.

In southern climes, in the noonday sun

Keep your powder dry.

That’s where Johnny gets his gun

Did you mean "dagnabbit"?

In a sixth-floor window, who will see

Meanwhile I corrected some grammatical errors that snuck in to my post...

Thon murderous beast whose names are three?

Dagnabbit

He checks th’ aim, inserts a shell

I probably did mean that.

And wide he opens the Gates of Hell

Comes of not being a native speaker ...

In Angels’ City, Bobby is chosen

https://www.proz.com/forum/covid\_19\_outbreak/342238-corona\_quarantine\_diary-page36.html

But his dreams will soon be frozen

Local time: 10:29

For amid an Ambassador’s stoves and plates

No sooner said than done...

The cold-eyed killer skulks and waits

Our Prime Minister declared today the "state of calamity" in the country due to the "serious evolution" of the pandemic.

RFK speaks, the crowd does roar,

The country crossed the barrier of two thousand daily cases.

And his lifeblood leaves him on a kitchen floor

We can be also forced to use facial masks on the streets.

Edward late at night carouses

And here are other measures we need to follow:

A comely damsel his lust arouses

https://www.plataformamedia.com/en/2020/10/14/portugal-returns-to-the-state-of-calamity-use-of-mask-on-public-roads-recommended/

A giggle here, a fondle there,

I wonder when will this plague end in the world...

Sore distract him from all due care

Ok, let's stay positive and bring some joy, laughter, and smiles with children.

And yon fair maid meets her demise

I have found this old interview (probably some of you have already watched) about Donald Trump:

‘Neath a bridge too far, a Bridge of Sighs”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYviM5xevC8

“Gee whizz!

Local time: 11:29

Holy hell!

Calamity

That’s the third time this week!”

I noticed that, expressisverbis, on the news tonight.

I jerked up in bed.

They said that "calamity" in Spanish, which struck me as odd.

That creepy dream with the three witches again.

Is a calamity the same as an alarm, like we have here?

Sure gave me the willies.

Some European Union!

But what did it all mean?

We can't even use the same terms for a huge, frightening, chaotic balls-up.

Sixth floor?

The positive side is that this time we all know what it means, with none of the previous mystery.

A beast with three names?

Great Trump video!

As for the rest of it … maybe I ought to talk to my brothers, warn them or something.

I hadn't seen it before.

But what would I even warn them about?:

Kids (and drunks) always tell the truth.

“Bobby, listen to me, stay out of the kitchen, will ya?

"States of Confusion"

And Ted, you gotta lose the broads and bridges right now, you hear?”

It seems we have 4 states from the less to the most serious: State of Alert, State of Contingency, State of Calamity and State of Emergency.

Beside me, Jackie was up in bed too.

I am going to try to translate their definitions from what I read in a newspaper:

She put her arm around my shoulders.

Alert:

“What is it, hon?

It is the lowest state, it represents a less serious and therefore less limiting situation.

Why, you’re in a cold sweat, my love.

This means that "the means of civil protection and the security forces and services are in readiness" to restore order.

What’s the matter?”

Contingency:

“A bad dream, sweetie.

This state requires people to take preventive measures, such as limiting gatherings or short hours in shops.

It’s nothing.

The measures taken by municipalities to deal with the situation must be articulated and coordinated with civil protection authorities at national level.

Sorry I woke you.”

Calamity:

“Oh no, I wasn’t sleeping.

The law states that may impose restrictions on the movement or residence of persons, other living beings or vehicles, and it can be applied for reasons of the safety of people or operations.

I couldn’t. Jack, I just can’t decide between beige or mustard yellow for the new drawing room.

It is also legal to form "sanitary and safety fences"; establish of limits or restrictions to the movement of persons, other living beings or vehicles, submit to collective controls to prevent the spread of epidemic outbreaks, as per the "Basic Law of Civil Protection".

What do you think?

Emergency:

Or should we go for pistachio?

An extreme measure of limitation of citizens' rights, freedoms and guarantees, which is why it is provided for in the Constitution and may imply forced quarantine and isolation for all.

What about a classic azure?

Several fundamental rights can be denied, such as the right of movement, strike, or demonstration.

There’s just so much to think about, Jack.

According to the law, only certain fundamental rights cannot be suspended (the right to life, personal integrity, personal identity, civil capacity and citizenship, the non-retroactivity of criminal law, the right of defence of the accused and freedom of conscience and religion).

I don’t know how I get through the day, honestly I don’t.

Only the President can declare a State of Emergency, a decision which must be approved by the Assembly of the Republic, after hearing the Government.

Sometimes it gets me down so much.

And last, but not least, we also have a 5th State:

It gets to my soul, my love.

It is called the "State of Siege":

You know what a sensitive creature you’re married to.

The State of Siege can only be declared in the event of effective or imminent aggression by foreign forces, serious threat, or in situations where the sovereignty, independence, integrity of the territory or the democratic constitutional order are called into question.

It’s all because the French are due for a visit soon, and I’m damned if I’m going to give dreary old Yvonne even the least chance to bitch about our wonderful White House.”

To be honest, I had to make my research, because I was confused by all those states.

She thought Charlie Boy’s wife really had it in for her. S

The "Alarma" Spanish state is the equivalent to the Portuguese "Alerta" (Alert) state.

he probably wasn’t far wrong, though, the way the man had drooled over her in Paris.

Please check it here:

I was bored out of my mind listening to him droning on about the spirit of June 18 beside me at dinner over there, but I had to keep him away from Jackie because I reckoned the old soldier would have had his hand up her skirt under the table before you could say ‘Let them eat muff cake’.

"¿Qué es el estado de alarma?

I could handle Jackie’s obsession with the White House décor, though, and 99% of the time she was there for me.

El estado de alarma es el más leve de los tres estados excepcionales (alarma, excepción y sitio) y está previsto para grandes catástrofes, crisis sanitarias o paralizaciones graves de los servicios públicos como consecuencia de huelgas o conflictos laborales."

But the other 1% was dreadful.

https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20201009/estado-de-alarma-que-es-madrid-7888430

I came home early one night, found her lolling on the sofa in the lounge.

Oh, that is so true!

She’d obviously had a few Pinot Noirs too many:

Children and drunks are pure persons!

“Oh my word, there he is,” she said, trying to get her head off the cushion and on to the edge of the sofa to get a good look at me, and succeeding at the third attempt, but spilling wine on the carpet in the process, “the Man of the Moment. Jack Kennedy.

You may find several errors, so please correct them.

Well, well, well.

I was writing this while my cat was destroying my flat...!

My little Jack-in-the-box.

Thanks

Do you know why I call you Jack-in-the-box, honey?”

Home alone V (Let the word go out from this day forth)

“No, I don’t, sweetheart.

Oct 15

Because I pop up unexpectedly?” I asked, guardedly.

[for those unfamiliar with the “wavies” at the end last time, you have to imagine we’re moving into fantasy or flashback mode, like on the TV or during films when the screen goes wavy and people’s voices go all echoey] …

“Well, that too, dear,” she slurred, kicking off her shoes and spilling the rest of the wine.

“Double, double toil and trouble

“You pop in, and you pop out, you pop out and you pop in.

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble

But the main reason I call you Jack-in-the-box is because you’re always in some box or other.

Hear ye now our prophecy

Everyone’s but mine, that is.

A tragic tale of brethren three

Tell me, what does that F really stand for in John F. Kennedy?

Of the Kennedy clan, of love and hate

Is it Faggot?”

Of plots a-hatching and loathsome fate

She giggled, and reached for the bottle of wine on the coffee table.

In southern climes, in the noonday sun

“Oh no, we know you’re no fag.

That’s where Johnny gets his gun

Could it be Fuckwipe?

In a sixth-floor window, who will see

Or Philanderer?

Thon murderous beast whose names are three?

“Philanderer is spelt with …” I began, but she cut me short.

He checks th’ aim, inserts a shell

“I know how to spell philanderer, Mr President.”

And wide he opens the Gates of Hell

She waved her glass at me.

In Angels’ City, Bobby is chosen

“In fact, I’ll spell it out for you, would you like that, Jack, yes, I will.

But his dreams will soon be frozen

Philanderer, philanderer … now, let me see, it begins with an A, then an S, then another S, then an H, and then O-L-E, “philanderer”.

For amid an Ambassador’s stoves and plates

Am I right, Jack?

The cold-eyed killer skulks and waits

I am, aren’t I?

RFK speaks, the crowd does roar,

I was always good at spelling bees, you know.

And his lifeblood leaves him on a kitchen floor

So who was it this evening, honey?

Edward late at night carouses

Was it that blonde tart Marilyn?

A comely damsel his lust arouses

Maybe she ran her fingers up and down it between your legs like it was a microphone and sang Happy Birthday into it all big-breathy and big-breasty, huh, did she, Jack?”

A giggle here, a fondle there,

She brought the bottle up to her mouth like it was a mike, and began to sing: “Happy Birthday to Jack - ‘

Sore distract him from all due care

Cos he digs my huge rack - Happy Birthday, Happy Birth-…”

And yon fair maid meets her demise

“How can you say such a disgusting thing?” I countered.

‘Neath a bridge too far, a Bridge of Sighs”

“Of course I haven’t been with her today.

“Gee whizz!

In fact, I haven’t even seen that woman in ages.

Holy hell!

You’re well off course, Jackie.”

That’s the third time this week!”

And I hadn’t lied, either.

I jerked up in bed.

How could I lie to the mother of my children?

That creepy dream with the three witches again.

Of course I hadn’t been with Marilyn.

Sure gave me the willies.

I was telling the truth.

But what did it all mean?

What they call a half-truth, though, because actually I’d been heaving it into someone else that particular day.

Sixth floor?

But she wasn’t far wrong.

A beast with three names?

The last time I’d been with Marilyn was the day after she sang Happy Birthday to me live on stage.

As for the rest of it … maybe I ought to talk to my brothers, warn them or something.

What a song.

But what would I even warn them about?:

But if I liked the girl’s singing,

“Bobby, listen to me, stay out of the kitchen, will ya?

I liked her birthday gift that next night even more.

And Ted, you gotta lose the broads and bridges right now, you hear?”

It was wrapped, too.

Beside me, Jackie was up in bed too.

All wrapped up real tight in the scantiest, skimpiest, slinkiest, sexiest, see-throughest dress I’ve ever seen.

She put her arm around my shoulders.

That’s what being the President’s all about.

“What is it, hon?

One day you’re staring down Khrushchev over missiles in Cuba, or standing up to Castro himself over the Bay of Pigs fiasco, or sorting out the unsortable, that Godawful lose-lose mess over in Nam, as the Leader of the Free World, and the next you’re taking much tougher decisions on wallpaper and listening to the accusations and tribulations of the wives of powerful men, while the kids play under your desk.

Why, you’re in a cold sweat, my love.

But I had to forget about all that Johnny-getting-his-gun stuff, put it out of my mind pronto, because I had a big day ahead of me.

What’s the matter?”

And anyway, to hell with it, I’d never been called Johnny.

“A bad dream, sweetie.

Pop never called me that, and neither did anybody else.

It’s nothing.

A long time ago he said to me,

Sorry I woke you.”

“Son, I could never make the presidency myself.

“Oh no, I wasn’t sleeping.

Too dodgy.

I couldn’t. Jack, I just can’t decide between beige or mustard yellow for the new drawing room.

Too sleazy.

What do you think?

Too Irish. Too late. Joe’s gone, so he has, fighting for his country.

Or should we go for pistachio?

Your sisters were never in the running, of course.

What about a classic azure?

Kick got herself killed with that no-good Fitzwilliam guy anyway, God rest her soul. And especially not Rosemary.

There’s just so much to think about, Jack.

She was a little slow, you might say.

I don’t know how I get through the day, honestly I don’t.

Not as slow as she was after the lobotomy I arranged, but I made a big mistake, and I’ll pay for it when I go to meet my maker.

Sometimes it gets me down so much.

Everyone makes mistakes, don’t they?

It gets to my soul, my love.

But how could a woman be President, bejasus?

You know what a sensitive creature you’re married to.

The very idea.

It’s all because the French are due for a visit soon, and I’m damned if I’m going to give dreary old Yvonne even the least chance to bitch about our wonderful White House.”

Son, they call your brother Robert Bobby, and Edward’s Ted.

She thought Charlie Boy’s wife really had it in for her. S

But nobody calls you Johnny, oh no, not you.

he probably wasn’t far wrong, though, the way the man had drooled over her in Paris.

You’re John. Just John. John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the next President of these United States of America.”

I was bored out of my mind listening to him droning on about the spirit of June 18 beside me at dinner over there, but I had to keep him away from Jackie because I reckoned the old soldier would have had his hand up her skirt under the table before you could say ‘Let them eat muff cake’.

And I made it, I sure did.

I could handle Jackie’s obsession with the White House décor, though, and 99% of the time she was there for me.

With a little help from him.

But the other 1% was dreadful.

OK, not just a little.

I came home early one night, found her lolling on the sofa in the lounge.

A lot.

She’d obviously had a few Pinot Noirs too many:

As he reminded me one day when Bobby was becoming a little too zealous in his new job as Attorney-General:

“Oh my word, there he is,” she said, trying to get her head off the cushion and on to the edge of the sofa to get a good look at me, and succeeding at the third attempt, but spilling wine on the carpet in the process, “the Man of the Moment. Jack Kennedy.

“You gotta persuade your brother not to stick his nose into other people’s business, John,” he told me.

Well, well, well.

“He’s beginning to make me look bad.

My little Jack-in-the-box.

I have a past, you know.

Do you know why I call you Jack-in-the-box, honey?”

I talked to him, but he told me he couldn’t leave it.

“No, I don’t, sweetheart.

I said these people were just businessmen, even if they did bend the rules a little, and he tried to tell me they were criminals.

Because I pop up unexpectedly?” I asked, guardedly.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph too!

“Well, that too, dear,” she slurred, kicking off her shoes and spilling the rest of the wine.

You think you got to be President because of my pretty face?

“You pop in, and you pop out, you pop out and you pop in.

Or yours, or his?

But the main reason I call you Jack-in-the-box is because you’re always in some box or other.

You know why they used to call me Bootleg Kennedy?

Everyone’s but mine, that is.

It sure as hell wasn’t because I wore boots on the end of my legs.

Tell me, what does that F really stand for in John F. Kennedy?

Fact is, I bought you this presidency, son, and Bobby’s gonna have to back down a tad.

Is it Faggot?”

So you remind your brother,

She giggled, and reached for the bottle of wine on the coffee table.

John.

“Oh no, we know you’re no fag.

You remind him of your own words,

Could it be Fuckwipe?

“Think what your country can do for you.”

Or Philanderer?

“Actually, pop, what I said was …”

“Philanderer is spelt with …” I began, but she cut me short.

But he was already making tracks.

“I know how to spell philanderer, Mr President.”

“Remember what I said, son.

She waved her glass at me.

I got a date with Judith.

“In fact, I’ll spell it out for you, would you like that, Jack, yes, I will.

Sam Giancana’s out of town until next week, so I gotta make hay while the sun shines.”

Philanderer, philanderer … now, let me see, it begins with an A, then an S, then another S, then an H, and then O-L-E, “philanderer”.

Bobby was walking a dangerous line with that kind of thing.

Am I right, Jack?

And me too.

I am, aren’t I?

Man, we had that creep J Edgar sniffing at our asses all day every day at the start.

I was always good at spelling bees, you know.

And not just because of the mafia.

So who was it this evening, honey?

No, we knew he was wire-tapping us to latch on to our little foibles and indiscretions here and there, and probably spying on us with our girlfriends too.

Was it that blonde tart Marilyn?

At first we just had some fun behind his back.

Maybe she ran her fingers up and down it between your legs like it was a microphone and sang Happy Birthday into it all big-breathy and big-breasty, huh, did she, Jack?”

We would be standing around in the Oval Office, the three of us, and Hoover would be looking at some report or other on my desk, talking to me about it, and over his shoulder I could see Bobby blowing out his jowls and throwing out his stomach to ape Hoover, and rubbing his crotch.

She brought the bottle up to her mouth like it was a mike, and began to sing: “Happy Birthday to Jack - ‘

Or then he’d be busting my brother’s chops in one corner of the room, and I’d turn around, drop my pants and do a quick moon for Bobby to see.

Cos he digs my huge rack - Happy Birthday, Happy Birth-…”

We sure laughed our nuts off at that kind of thing.

“How can you say such a disgusting thing?” I countered.

But in the end Bobby and I were pretty sure he was smooching and cuddling up with his “associate” Clyde Tolson on the quiet, so we had a bit of sleazy leverage on him too.

“Of course I haven’t been with her today.

After all, he might be the FBI, but what good’s the Secret Service to the President if he doesn’t use it?

In fact, I haven’t even seen that woman in ages.

So as time went on, we were much more relaxed. In fact, one night, when I was dollar sure I’d been tailed by the Feds to a tryst, I even had the lady write “Hi Edgar” on my butt with her lipstick, and then I minced all around the room in the altogether, just to make sure he got the message loud and clear.

You’re well off course, Jackie.”

And then Pop had pitched in for us again, too.

And I hadn’t lied, either.

Said he’d made Hoover an offer he couldn’t refuse.

How could I lie to the mother of my children?

I got to admit it was pretty smart. Kind of illegal, but smart:

Of course I hadn’t been with Marilyn.

What he did was invite Hoover over to the White House to talk to him about something, and when J Edgar arrived he was playing with little Caroline in the den.

I was telling the truth.

He said, “Oh Mr Hoover, thank you so much for coming, but I’ve gotta slip out for a while, and I’m dreadfully sorry, but can you look after little Caroline here for me while I’m gone?”

What they call a half-truth, though, because actually I’d been heaving it into someone else that particular day.

So saying, he picks up Caroline and puts her into Hoover’s arms.

But she wasn’t far wrong.

Hoover wasn’t too pleased, of course.

The last time I’d been with Marilyn was the day after she sang Happy Birthday to me live on stage.

Pop just strolled around for ten minutes, and when he came back, the both of them were sitting on the floor playing with her dollies.

What a song.

Pop said “Thank you so much, Mr Hoover, and I hope Caroline behaved herself.”

But if I liked the girl’s singing,

Hoover said, “Oh yes, she’s a charming child, and such a beautiful little girl too.

I liked her birthday gift that next night even more.

You and your son are very lucky.”

It was wrapped, too.

Then Pop shooed Caroline out, and said:

All wrapped up real tight in the scantiest, skimpiest, slinkiest, sexiest, see-throughest dress I’ve ever seen.

“Yes, she is a cute kid, isn’t she, Hoover?

That’s what being the President’s all about.

Her daddy loves her, and she loves him like nothing in this world.

One day you’re staring down Khrushchev over missiles in Cuba, or standing up to Castro himself over the Bay of Pigs fiasco, or sorting out the unsortable, that Godawful lose-lose mess over in Nam, as the Leader of the Free World, and the next you’re taking much tougher decisions on wallpaper and listening to the accusations and tribulations of the wives of powerful men, while the kids play under your desk.

There isn’t anything she wouldn’t do for him, you see.

But I had to forget about all that Johnny-getting-his-gun stuff, put it out of my mind pronto, because I had a big day ahead of me.

Any.

And anyway, to hell with it, I’d never been called Johnny.

Thing. If her father even asked her to tell a little white lie for him, she’d do it.

Pop never called me that, and neither did anybody else.

That’s the love between a father and a daughter, Hoover.

A long time ago he said to me,

You aren’t married, are you, Hoover?

“Son, I could never make the presidency myself.

And no kids either, right?

Too dodgy.

So you can only imagine.

Too sleazy.

And what I want you to do,

Too Irish. Too late. Joe’s gone, so he has, fighting for his country.

Hoover, is to imagine little Caroline there, just five years old, in her best dress and her pigtails, going down Pennsylvania Avenue with her nanny and her teddy bear, and walking up the steps to the nearest police station,

Your sisters were never in the running, of course.

holding her nanny’s hand in hers, and the other hand holding her bear by the leg, with poor little teddy’s head bumpety-bumpety-bumping up the steps, and the cops saying,

Kick got herself killed with that no-good Fitzwilliam guy anyway, God rest her soul. And especially not Rosemary.

“Well howdy, young lady, and what can we do for you?”, and then little Caroline starts to sob and says,

She was a little slow, you might say.

“There’s a bad man called Hoover comes to our house, and he touched me and held me and played with me and said I was such a beautiful little girl, and he doesn’t like my daddy.”

Not as slow as she was after the lobotomy I arranged, but I made a big mistake, and I’ll pay for it when I go to meet my maker.

None of which is a lie, of course, so she doesn’t even have to worry her pretty little head about that when she says her prayers to Jesus every night with her daddy, but you get the picture, Hoover.

Everyone makes mistakes, don’t they?

The cops will fill in the gaps.

But how could a woman be President, bejasus?

It’s sketchy and maybe shaky too, but not as shaky as your legs will be in the showers at the Washington Penitentiary with all those big bad SOBs lining up behind you.

The very idea.

Especially as you were instrumental in putting a lot of them there in the first place. In the best-case scenario, you’d lose your job, your prestige, and your respect.

Son, they call your brother Robert Bobby, and Edward’s Ted.

At worst you’d be looking at thirty years in the big house among all the faggots.

But nobody calls you Johnny, oh no, not you.

I hear that kind of stuff doesn’t bother you so much, but even so it’s always nice to be able to choose, ain’t it, Hoover?

You’re John. Just John. John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the next President of these United States of America.”

You leave the Kennedy brothers alone, you hear?”

And I made it, I sure did.

When he told me what he’d done, I was horrified, but all he said was “What, suddenly it’s a crime to break the law?”

With a little help from him.

Hell, was that the time?

OK, not just a little.

Shucks, I had to get a move on.

A lot.

Tell you the truth, I was bushed, and the last thing I wanted to do was travel, but Jackie was all excited about it, had bought new clothes and all.

As he reminded me one day when Bobby was becoming a little too zealous in his new job as Attorney-General:

She showed me the matching hat this morning.

“You gotta persuade your brother not to stick his nose into other people’s business, John,” he told me.

Said it was a “pill-box”.

“He’s beginning to make me look bad.

Not that that meant anything to me.

I have a past, you know.

And not that a new getup was anything new.

I talked to him, but he told me he couldn’t leave it.

New for Jackie would be wearing an old outfit.

I said these people were just businessmen, even if they did bend the rules a little, and he tried to tell me they were criminals.

But I didn’t care about all that.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph too!

I knew I was a good father, but I also knew I wasn’t the world’s greatest husband.

You think you got to be President because of my pretty face?

No, I hadn’t been all I should have been to Jackie, and so I was usually more than eager to make it up to her when I could.

Or yours, or his?

And she was all smiling and happy about her smart little pink suit for the trip, so that made me happy too.

You know why they used to call me Bootleg Kennedy?

After all, it was bound to be a swell day out – a bit of flesh-pressing and baby-kissing with the rednecks and their southern belles, lunch with Governor Connally and his wife, and straight back home.

It sure as hell wasn’t because I wore boots on the end of my legs.

Yep, I was feeling better about it all already.

Fact is, I bought you this presidency, son, and Bobby’s gonna have to back down a tad.

Maybe looking forward to it, even.

So you remind your brother,

What the hell, why not?

John.

Dallas, here we come.

You remind him of your own words,

What’s not to like?

“Think what your country can do for you.”

Translator depression, anyone?

“Actually, pop, what I said was …”

Oct 16

But he was already making tracks.

I can't be the only one. I see what I call a "translation tunnel" of wildly complicated stuff stretching out before me so far I can't see the light at the end of it all.

“Remember what I said, son.

One of those jobs.

I got a date with Judith.

Think of all the possible problems you might have with translations - difficulty, format, research etc. - and then think of a translation where every single one of them applies.

Sam Giancana’s out of town until next week, so I gotta make hay while the sun shines.”

That's the kind of blaargh I'm on right now, and have been since 6 am.

Bobby was walking a dangerous line with that kind of thing.

Not that it's such a rush, but that's when I do my best work, from then until now.

And me too.

And after I've done that one, there are another two just the same.

Man, we had that creep J Edgar sniffing at our asses all day every day at the start.

Not after I've done the first one, in fact, because I'm going to have to move around from one to the other to keep my sanity and to keep deadlines too.

And not just because of the mafia.

Just thought I'd mention it.

No, we knew he was wire-tapping us to latch on to our little foibles and indiscretions here and there, and probably spying on us with our girlfriends too.

The other side of the coin is that I had a doctor's appointment this morning, which I was just about thinking of getting ready for, although it was just an unwelcome interruption for me, when the doctor rings instead to say they were doing all the stuff by phone that they could do by phone, to reduce crowding and backlogs, and they're also sending out all the paperwork for the next appointment by post too.

At first we just had some fun behind his back.

So she just asked a few questions, and I gave a few answers.

We would be standing around in the Oval Office, the three of us, and Hoover would be looking at some report or other on my desk, talking to me about it, and over his shoulder I could see Bobby blowing out his jowls and throwing out his stomach to ape Hoover, and rubbing his crotch.

Which is great.

Or then he’d be busting my brother’s chops in one corner of the room, and I’d turn around, drop my pants and do a quick moon for Bobby to see.

The way I was feeling when she rang, it wouldn't have bothered me unduly if she'd said the reason she was telling me not to bother going was because I'd be dead by tomorrow, so there wasn't any point even going there, and definitely no point getting another appointment.

We sure laughed our nuts off at that kind of thing.

Or doing these translations, come to think of it!

But in the end Bobby and I were pretty sure he was smooching and cuddling up with his “associate” Clyde Tolson on the quiet, so we had a bit of sleazy leverage on him too.

Anyway, I've gained another hour to spend in the tunnel. ...

After all, he might be the FBI, but what good’s the Secret Service to the President if he doesn’t use it?

Is that a faint light I can see in the distance?

So as time went on, we were much more relaxed. In fact, one night, when I was dollar sure I’d been tailed by the Feds to a tryst, I even had the lady write “Hi Edgar” on my butt with her lipstick, and then I minced all around the room in the altogether, just to make sure he got the message loud and clear.

Certainly might be.

And then Pop had pitched in for us again, too.

Translator's irritation here

Said he’d made Hoover an offer he couldn’t refuse.

Yesterday, I also received a project with a tight deadline, but I had no depression at all, the text was nice.

I got to admit it was pretty smart. Kind of illegal, but smart:

I try to not be depressed with annoying texts.

What he did was invite Hoover over to the White House to talk to him about something, and when J Edgar arrived he was playing with little Caroline in the den.

Regarding medical appointments, it seems that all medical institutions are choosing this system, for patient protection as we all know.

He said, “Oh Mr Hoover, thank you so much for coming, but I’ve gotta slip out for a while, and I’m dreadfully sorry, but can you look after little Caroline here for me while I’m gone?”

I also had a medical appointment by phone last month.

So saying, he picks up Caroline and puts her into Hoover’s arms.

Now, one thing is getting on my nerves: our Government wants to impose the installation of an application ("StayWay Covid") on our smartphones.

Hoover wasn’t too pleased, of course.

I understand this is another protection measure, but it is ridiculous!

Pop just strolled around for ten minutes, and when he came back, the both of them were sitting on the floor playing with her dollies.

Old people who don't have a mobile phone, or mobile phone users who don't have an internet connection, how do they do it?

Pop said “Thank you so much, Mr Hoover, and I hope Caroline behaved herself.”

The amount of a large fine can be determined, if we do not have that application installed.

Hoover said, “Oh yes, she’s a charming child, and such a beautiful little girl too.

The Government is still analysing this, but I hope this measure won't be successful.

You and your son are very lucky.”

I have no guarantee this is a 100% reliable tool for detecting the contact with infected people, or if I have been exposed to the disease.

Then Pop shooed Caroline out, and said:

Are other countries adopting similar measures?

“Yes, she is a cute kid, isn’t she, Hoover?

https://stayawaycovid.pt/landing-page/

Her daddy loves her, and she loves him like nothing in this world.

PS: I wish you good luck with this translation!

There isn’t anything she wouldn’t do for him, you see.

You will see the end of that tunnel soon!

Any.

A (small) hand of hope!

Thing. If her father even asked her to tell a little white lie for him, she’d do it.

Oct 17

That’s the love between a father and a daughter, Hoover.

https://www.hindustantimes.com/it-s-viral/newborn-baby-pulls-doctor-s-mask-viral-pic-turns-into-symbol-of-hope-for-many/story-lf7S5LRBKr1z9ZRXJiztnI.html

You aren’t married, are you, Hoover?

Suffering Spaniards

And no kids either, right?

Oct 20

So you can only imagine.

Indeed, Spain continues to suffer, with various locations shut down across the country, or about to be. Navarra just down the road's practically a no-go area, for instance.

And what I want you to do,

And a vote of no-confidence coming up in parliament tomorrow, too, or was it the next day?

Hoover, is to imagine little Caroline there, just five years old, in her best dress and her pigtails, going down Pennsylvania Avenue with her nanny and her teddy bear, and walking up the steps to the nearest police station,

Doesn't really matter, because it'll solve bog all, whatever way it goes.

holding her nanny’s hand in hers, and the other hand holding her bear by the leg, with poor little teddy’s head bumpety-bumpety-bumping up the steps, and the cops saying,

I only watch and read the news now because I feel I have a duty to keep myself informed, but it might as well be the Corona News, same thing every day.

“Well howdy, young lady, and what can we do for you?”, and then little Caroline starts to sob and says,

The vote of no-confidence is by those cheery elements in Vox, the People who want to Put Things Right in This Country.

“There’s a bad man called Hoover comes to our house, and he touched me and held me and played with me and said I was such a beautiful little girl, and he doesn’t like my daddy.”

Right being the operating word.

None of which is a lie, of course, so she doesn’t even have to worry her pretty little head about that when she says her prayers to Jesus every night with her daddy, but you get the picture, Hoover.

To rid the country of a tyrant, they say.

The cops will fill in the gaps.

That's what the parliament's turned into, a venue for slanging matches.

It’s sketchy and maybe shaky too, but not as shaky as your legs will be in the showers at the Washington Penitentiary with all those big bad SOBs lining up behind you.

Meanwhile, the country goes to the perros.

Especially as you were instrumental in putting a lot of them there in the first place. In the best-case scenario, you’d lose your job, your prestige, and your respect.

Haven't posted on this for a few days now, due to shedloads of work, and in these viral times you have to keep a grateful nose to the blaargh grindstone.

At worst you’d be looking at thirty years in the big house among all the faggots.

I'm not finished with Home Alone, and hopefully I'll be able to put the Trump thing to bed soon.

I hear that kind of stuff doesn’t bother you so much, but even so it’s always nice to be able to choose, ain’t it, Hoover?

Before the Americans do.

You leave the Kennedy brothers alone, you hear?”

But that nonsense doesn't write itself (although sometimes I think it does), and I really don't have the time these days.

When he told me what he’d done, I was horrified, but all he said was “What, suddenly it’s a crime to break the law?”

However, thanks to Tom's "Completely frivolous thread" thread, I've also picked up some material that has good wavies potential.

Hell, was that the time?

I can say no more.

Shucks, I had to get a move on.

No end in sight :(

Tell you the truth, I was bushed, and the last thing I wanted to do was travel, but Jackie was all excited about it, had bought new clothes and all.

I can't wait to read it...

She showed me the matching hat this morning.

It is hitting us hard here too.

Said it was a “pill-box”.

A nurse committed suicide last week.

Not that that meant anything to me.

The shortage of doctors and added pressure on the healtcare providers by all means seem to be the cause of her suicide.

And not that a new getup was anything new.

(2010)

New for Jackie would be wearing an old outfit.

italština

But I didn’t care about all that.

Speechless

I knew I was a good father, but I also knew I wasn’t the world’s greatest husband.

The shortage of doctors and added pressure on the healthcare providers by all means seem to be the cause of her suicide.

No, I hadn’t been all I should have been to Jackie, and so I was usually more than eager to make it up to her when I could.

She must have felt so overwhelmed, helpless, and lonely.

And she was all smiling and happy about her smart little pink suit for the trip, so that made me happy too.

Definitions

After all, it was bound to be a swell day out – a bit of flesh-pressing and baby-kissing with the rednecks and their southern belles, lunch with Governor Connally and his wife, and straight back home.

Dreadful. I heard a classic definition of depression is when the person can see no way out.

Yep, I was feeling better about it all already.

And considering the more than disturbing trends on the Peninsula these days - again, because we don't seem to be learning anything in Iberia - there must be quite a few distressed people like her looking around them at the hospitals.

Maybe looking forward to it, even.

It's true

What the hell, why not?

P.L.F.Persio wrote:

Dallas, here we come.

I cannot find any English news, but this tragedy happened at Hospital de São João, in Porto.

What’s not to like?

Her name was Alice...

Translator depression, anyone?

A friend of her wrote the following text:

Oct 16

"Alice couldn't stand it any longer.

I can't be the only one. I see what I call a "translation tunnel" of wildly complicated stuff stretching out before me so far I can't see the light at the end of it all.

She lost the magic.

One of those jobs.

The charm of her exterior, but above all she lost the magic of her soul.

Think of all the possible problems you might have with translations - difficulty, format, research etc. - and then think of a translation where every single one of them applies.

Alice stopped believing in a country and in world that put aside almost everything to stop a storm: Covid-19.

That's the kind of blaargh I'm on right now, and have been since 6 am.

Alice needed help. R.I.P."

Not that it's such a rush, but that's when I do my best work, from then until now.

https://www.noticiasaominuto.com/fama/1607267/jorge-gabriel-lamenta-morte-de-enfermeira-nao-suportou-a-pressao

And after I've done that one, there are another two just the same.

This text above was posted as a tribute to Alice by a TV host in his Facebook account.

Not after I've done the first one, in fact, because I'm going to have to move around from one to the other to keep my sanity and to keep deadlines too.

I agree

Just thought I'd mention it.

This is what scares me the most.

The other side of the coin is that I had a doctor's appointment this morning, which I was just about thinking of getting ready for, although it was just an unwelcome interruption for me, when the doctor rings instead to say they were doing all the stuff by phone that they could do by phone, to reduce crowding and backlogs, and they're also sending out all the paperwork for the next appointment by post too.

Friday 23 October

So she just asked a few questions, and I gave a few answers.

Oct 23

Which is great.

7 am. Just been down for the paper.

The way I was feeling when she rang, it wouldn't have bothered me unduly if she'd said the reason she was telling me not to bother going was because I'd be dead by tomorrow, so there wasn't any point even going there, and definitely no point getting another appointment.

I noticed a woman looking at me.

Or doing these translations, come to think of it!

Looking at me rather longer than strictly necessary, too.

Anyway, I've gained another hour to spend in the tunnel. ...

A woman looking at me doesn’t bother me, obviously, why would it, I need all the help I can get.

Is that a faint light I can see in the distance?

Not that this woman was Kate Moss, also obviously.

Certainly might be.

She didn’t have Kate’s body, she didn’t have Kate’s face, and she didn’t have any Katemossishness at all.

Translator's irritation here

But she took a good look all the same, and then I realised the awful truth.

Yesterday, I also received a project with a tight deadline, but I had no depression at all, the text was nice.

I’d forgotten my face mask.

I try to not be depressed with annoying texts.

Back home, feeling like a feckless felon, I crept into the lift.

Regarding medical appointments, it seems that all medical institutions are choosing this system, for patient protection as we all know.

Thank God none of my masked neighbours were around to witness the vile offence, or to share the lift with me.

I also had a medical appointment by phone last month.

Not that they or I would have shared it, mask or no mask.

Now, one thing is getting on my nerves: our Government wants to impose the installation of an application ("StayWay Covid") on our smartphones.

haven’t shared this lift with anyone since March.

I understand this is another protection measure, but it is ridiculous!

Yes, all of a sudden I felt I was back in March, back to when I didn’t even use the lift, and nor did anyone else, even the fat bloke up there on the sixth floor I’d see through the spyhole (don’t judge me, please – we all use the spyhole, that’s what it’s there for, to spy), puffing and panting his way up (and even down) the stairs during lockdown.

Old people who don't have a mobile phone, or mobile phone users who don't have an internet connection, how do they do it?

Last night I’d arranged to have a post-clocking-off drink with the Basques in a bar that does the best tortillas in the world.

The amount of a large fine can be determined, if we do not have that application installed.

So they say.

The Government is still analysing this, but I hope this measure won't be successful.

Well, they might not have been the best in the world, but they were good and slightly liquidy, as a tortilla should be.

I have no guarantee this is a 100% reliable tool for detecting the contact with infected people, or if I have been exposed to the disease.

We had a spicy one (definitely not Basque, Christel).

Are other countries adopting similar measures?

But I wasn’t interested in the food, or the Voll Damm beer they offered me, saying they had no green-bottle Alhambra.

https://stayawaycovid.pt/landing-page/

Later I saw the chef downing a green Alhambra in the kitchen, and I’d have said something, incensed, but the Basques said No, leave it, it’s not worth it, Mervyn, don't make a scene, lad.

PS: I wish you good luck with this translation!

It was that kind of evening.

You will see the end of that tunnel soon!

James Thread-Closer had just closed a thread on me, and I was annoyed.

A (small) hand of hope!

Those of you who know me are aware that I don’t go in for long descriptive stuff,

Oct 17

Yon noble oak standing robust and, er, stalwart against … the stark, er, dawn of a new day (see?

https://www.hindustantimes.com/it-s-viral/newborn-baby-pulls-doctor-s-mask-viral-pic-turns-into-symbol-of-hope-for-many/story-lf7S5LRBKr1z9ZRXJiztnI.html

I can’t, and I don’t ...), but what I like to do, like Shakespeare, sitting there down at the pub, watching all the lords, ladies, wide boys, whores, hangers-on and pimps parading before him, and writing out all that Zounds, Sire, s’blood, thou must needs vouchsafe … blaargh, simply because he couldn’t afford the candles to light up his page at home, is to describe people.

Suffering Spaniards

People.

Oct 20

There were four people at the table directly opposite me and the Basques.

Indeed, Spain continues to suffer, with various locations shut down across the country, or about to be. Navarra just down the road's practically a no-go area, for instance.

Three male artistes and a groupie, I reckoned …

And a vote of no-confidence coming up in parliament tomorrow, too, or was it the next day?

O bum, o shit, o fuck, it’s time to get back to the endless, pitiless, meaningless blaargh.

Doesn't really matter, because it'll solve bog all, whatever way it goes.

More next time about Second-Wave People …

I only watch and read the news now because I feel I have a duty to keep myself informed, but it might as well be the Corona News, same thing every day.

B\*\*\*er the blaargh

The vote of no-confidence is by those cheery elements in Vox, the People who want to Put Things Right in This Country.

That's right, bother the blaargh.

Right being the operating word.

I've got the morning off.

To rid the country of a tyrant, they say.

Told the boss I couldn't take it today.

That's what the parliament's turned into, a venue for slanging matches.

I was up front and personal about it.

Meanwhile, the country goes to the perros.

It's always the way to go,

Haven't posted on this for a few days now, due to shedloads of work, and in these viral times you have to keep a grateful nose to the blaargh grindstone.

I feel. I came right out with it, I'll tell you:

I'm not finished with Home Alone, and hopefully I'll be able to put the Trump thing to bed soon.

"I'm fed up," I told him warmly.

Before the Americans do.

"Look at this utterly unstylish corporate codswallop I have to wrestle into something approaching style.

But that nonsense doesn't write itself (although sometimes I think it does), and I really don't have the time these days.

In fact, codswallop is being unkind to cods, not to mention wallops.

However, thanks to Tom's "Completely frivolous thread" thread, I've also picked up some material that has good wavies potential.

I'm burning up here.

I can say no more.

I just looked out the window at a fracas between a taxi driver and someone he'd nearly run over on the zebra crossing down there, and I almost went downstairs to punch either of them in the face, or even both of them.

No end in sight :(

I'd have punched that frigging zebra too, if it had given me any lip."

I can't wait to read it...

The boss nodded understandingly at me in the bathroom mirror.

It is hitting us hard here too.

"Take all the time you need, lad.

A nurse committed suicide last week.

Your job will be there waiting for you when you decide you can cope again."

The shortage of doctors and added pressure on the healtcare providers by all means seem to be the cause of her suicide.

So I've got the morning off.

(2010)

Might take the bloody afternoon and all.

italština

Local time: 11:41

Speechless

Day off

The shortage of doctors and added pressure on the healthcare providers by all means seem to be the cause of her suicide.

I might do a bit of blaargh later, but for the moment it's still my Day Off.

She must have felt so overwhelmed, helpless, and lonely.

You've got to get out and about:

Definitions

Me, I went for a drive, enshrouded in that guilty, depressing, overwhelming Should-Be-Translating-Really shroud (I'm sure you know what I mean), to get the car for the Basques.

Dreadful. I heard a classic definition of depression is when the person can see no way out.

Driving around Bilbao, I thought I might be swerving all over the shop, and cursing the elderly behind the wheel, but no.

And considering the more than disturbing trends on the Peninsula these days - again, because we don't seem to be learning anything in Iberia - there must be quite a few distressed people like her looking around them at the hospitals.

On the way to the garage I saw some sad sights that picked me up.

It's true

I know it's bad, but that's how I felt.

P.L.F.Persio wrote:

I saw the black girl on calle Gardoki with the little money tray in front of her who always trills Bueeeeeonos díííías at any time of day,

I cannot find any English news, but this tragedy happened at Hospital de São João, in Porto.

almost cried listening to the bloke outside El Corte Inglés on Gran Vía singing Benito Lertxundi's haunting Txori Ttikia ("Little Bird" - highly Basque-symbolic, about a bird that didn't want to live in a cage -

Her name was Alice...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUpVkM7wYH0&list=RDXEl9SswhlRk&index=10),

A friend of her wrote the following text:

I saw a very, very, very sad girl who looked as if she might have just been returning from a gig, and I don't mean a concert, with a generous décolletéd frontage that many would happily sneer at, and that many would condescendingly condone, but that both parties would goggle at and willingly get into if they could, pardon my French,

"Alice couldn't stand it any longer.

I saw a man arguing with a woman about money outside the casino,

She lost the magic.

I saw a lot of sad shit. I'll say it again, it shouldn't be like that, and I'm ashamed of myself, but it picked me up with a capital U in my translator depression.

The charm of her exterior, but above all she lost the magic of her soul.

I have just over 3K for next week, a 17K gig hanging in the balance while a former TV reporter considers my offer to translate her website, happy with the previous gig and wanting the same translator for the next, although she asked me to change a few things, saying I had perhaps introduced some sexual connotations

Alice stopped believing in a country and in world that put aside almost everything to stop a storm: Covid-19.

(I know what you're thinking, especially after yesterday's debacle, but really, both the agency and I thought WTF at the time, I only translate what they give me, and it was only in her head ...),

Alice needed help. R.I.P."

and also almost 4K, which - on Friday - after a few "modifications", has suddenly blossomed into more like 6K, and they "haven't finished it yet", so that's 6K and counting.

https://www.noticiasaominuto.com/fama/1607267/jorge-gabriel-lamenta-morte-de-enfermeira-nao-suportou-a-pressao

For Monday?

This text above was posted as a tribute to Alice by a TV host in his Facebook account.

You understand me, my customer said.

I agree

"I do," said I, "but do you understand me?

This is what scares me the most.

How much do you understand me?

Friday 23 October

And by "how much", I don't mean how much do you understand me.

Oct 23

I mean money, honey."

7 am. Just been down for the paper.

But she understood.

I noticed a woman looking at me.

Or I hope she did.

Looking at me rather longer than strictly necessary, too.

Whatever way it goes, I'm in for a shite weekend.

A woman looking at me doesn’t bother me, obviously, why would it, I need all the help I can get.

Local time: 05:41

Not that this woman was Kate Moss, also obviously.

Directives await

She didn’t have Kate’s body, she didn’t have Kate’s face, and she didn’t have any Katemossishness at all.

And until they are dealt with, I'm looking forward to reading today's diary entries.

But she took a good look all the same, and then I realised the awful truth.

Meanwhile, yesterdays headlines include "EU shuts door to travel from Canada amid surge of infections".

I’d forgotten my face mask.

So much for our flattened curve...

Back home, feeling like a feckless felon, I crept into the lift.

Local time: 10:41

Thank God none of my masked neighbours were around to witness the vile offence, or to share the lift with me.

It's Friday and...

Not that they or I would have shared it, mask or no mask.

I have to get it off my chest...

haven’t shared this lift with anyone since March.

Mervyn, I'm sorry for hijacking your diary!

Yes, all of a sudden I felt I was back in March, back to when I didn’t even use the lift, and nor did anyone else, even the fat bloke up there on the sixth floor I’d see through the spyhole (don’t judge me, please – we all use the spyhole, that’s what it’s there for, to spy), puffing and panting his way up (and even down) the stairs during lockdown.

There was a time I believed coronavirus would change people for the better, but I was wrong.

Last night I’d arranged to have a post-clocking-off drink with the Basques in a bar that does the best tortillas in the world.

People have changed, yes, but... for the worse.

So they say.

In real or virtual places, I keep seeing no respect for others.

Well, they might not have been the best in the world, but they were good and slightly liquidy, as a tortilla should be.

We have a professional and personal responsibility to be civil and show respect and kindness for others at all times.

We had a spicy one (definitely not Basque, Christel).

This is not what I see these last years everywhere, including Portugal (sometimes, I think I don't know my country anymore).

But I wasn’t interested in the food, or the Voll Damm beer they offered me, saying they had no green-bottle Alhambra.

And this is not what I saw yesterday in one of the threads of this website.

Later I saw the chef downing a green Alhambra in the kitchen, and I’d have said something, incensed, but the Basques said No, leave it, it’s not worth it, Mervyn, don't make a scene, lad.

The lack of respect, intrusion in private life, and unfair treatment are the worst traits that the human being can show.

It was that kind of evening.

Nobody's perfect, but we can keep try and trying to be better every day, myself included!

James Thread-Closer had just closed a thread on me, and I was annoyed.

Yes, I have many faults.

Those of you who know me are aware that I don’t go in for long descriptive stuff,

I will be waiting as well for reading the "next chapter" of the diary!

Yon noble oak standing robust and, er, stalwart against … the stark, er, dawn of a new day (see?

It's not hijacking ...

I can’t, and I don’t ...), but what I like to do, like Shakespeare, sitting there down at the pub, watching all the lords, ladies, wide boys, whores, hangers-on and pimps parading before him, and writing out all that Zounds, Sire, s’blood, thou must needs vouchsafe … blaargh, simply because he couldn’t afford the candles to light up his page at home, is to describe people.

... Exy, it's called contributing, not hijacking.

People.

"Sorry" doesn't apply ...

There were four people at the table directly opposite me and the Basques.

For what it's worth, I finished off my Day Off (jeez, the solid-state bollocks I'm going to have to print out tomorrow ..., but I won't - can't - do it now) at El Corte Inglés.

Three male artistes and a groupie, I reckoned …

Four o'clock is the perfect time to go to El Corte Inglés.

O bum, o shit, o fuck, it’s time to get back to the endless, pitiless, meaningless blaargh.

All the mammas and pappas either go before that, or after.

More next time about Second-Wave People …

I know my hugely amiable female friends at the meat and cheese counter could tell I'd been crying (the mask concentrates your gaze on the eyes, I see that now), and were wondering why, but they're too nice and polite to ask why, and I didn't explain.

B\*\*\*er the blaargh

They didn't ask why because why would they, and I couldn't have explained it to them or to myself anyway.

That's right, bother the blaargh.

Now I'm going to do what I never do at 5 pm, and that's watch a film I recorded a few days ago, because what I want, no, need, to do is laugh -

I've got the morning off.

"Analyze That", with my ultimate hero, Robert de Niro.

Told the boss I couldn't take it today.

And I hope you like that rhyme, too, because I do.

I was up front and personal about it.

Oh look, there's another one ...

It's always the way to go,

Bad guy, good guy, funny guy, even good guy with occasional badassness (Mad Dog and Glory),

I feel. I came right out with it, I'll tell you:

Robert can do them all.

"I'm fed up," I told him warmly.

In the admittedly unlikely event you're reading this,

"Look at this utterly unstylish corporate codswallop I have to wrestle into something approaching style.

Bob (can I call you Bob, like Scorsese does?), if you're ever in Bilbao, I'll be your interpreter for free, plus I know a few locales you'll like.

In fact, codswallop is being unkind to cods, not to mention wallops.

And I know "Analyze That"'s not as good as "Analyze This", but I'm told it's a free country, so I think what I like.

I'm burning up here.

My turn

I just looked out the window at a fracas between a taxi driver and someone he'd nearly run over on the zebra crossing down there, and I almost went downstairs to punch either of them in the face, or even both of them.

to go to Lidl supermarket.

I'd have punched that frigging zebra too, if it had given me any lip."

Let me see if I find the Knorr pea soup I miss El Corte Inglés (on the other side of the Douro River), but I am quite far to go there.

The boss nodded understandingly at me in the bathroom mirror.

Enjoy Robert de Niro movie!

"Take all the time you need, lad.

I go for Al Pacino...

Your job will be there waiting for you when you decide you can cope again."

Exy...

So I've got the morning off.

What a considerate, compassionate, absolutely lovely, and all-round excellent young woman you are.

Might take the bloody afternoon and all.

I have to say it on a public forum like this.

Local time: 11:41

Life's too short not to tell someone how honoured I am I met them, even if it sounds lovey-dovey and schmaltzy.

Day off

I don't care.

I might do a bit of blaargh later, but for the moment it's still my Day Off.

And Mervyn, don't let the bastards grind you down.

You've got to get out and about:

We may not know you well enough to be called your friends, but we can see who you are, we see you.

Me, I went for a drive, enshrouded in that guilty, depressing, overwhelming Should-Be-Translating-Really shroud (I'm sure you know what I mean), to get the car for the Basques.

Mmh, that sounds a bit creepy... but you get it, right?

Driving around Bilbao, I thought I might be swerving all over the shop, and cursing the elderly behind the wheel, but no.

I don't know how to insert a blushing smiley here...

On the way to the garage I saw some sad sights that picked me up.

Life's too short not to tell someone how honoured I am I met them, even if it sounds lovey-dovey and schmaltzy. I don't care.

I know it's bad, but that's how I felt.

I am speechless and blushing... but I feel I am writing to a lovely young lady who can be also described with these kind words above.

I saw the black girl on calle Gardoki with the little money tray in front of her who always trills Bueeeeeonos díííías at any time of day,

The honour is all mine to meet you

almost cried listening to the bloke outside El Corte Inglés on Gran Vía singing Benito Lertxundi's haunting Txori Ttikia ("Little Bird" - highly Basque-symbolic, about a bird that didn't want to live in a cage -

By now, Mervyn is watching Robert de Niro, probably eating a cheese toast with some new and savoury Spanish herbs he doesn't know yet and trying to "Analyse That"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUpVkM7wYH0&list=RDXEl9SswhlRk&index=10),

Family

I saw a very, very, very sad girl who looked as if she might have just been returning from a gig, and I don't mean a concert, with a generous décolletéd frontage that many would happily sneer at, and that many would condescendingly condone, but that both parties would goggle at and willingly get into if they could, pardon my French,

Not everything de Niro touches turns to gold, we watched one called The Family recently, a mob “comedy”, which was horrendous... but also brilliant because his wife was Michelle Pfeiffer, who was always my dream woman and has only got better with age.

I saw a man arguing with a woman about money outside the casino,

Of course, his defining role will always be, no not Taxi Driver, as a Fokker.

I saw a lot of sad shit. I'll say it again, it shouldn't be like that, and I'm ashamed of myself, but it picked me up with a capital U in my translator depression.

Call me a pleb, a philistine, I don’t care.

I have just over 3K for next week, a 17K gig hanging in the balance while a former TV reporter considers my offer to translate her website, happy with the previous gig and wanting the same translator for the next, although she asked me to change a few things, saying I had perhaps introduced some sexual connotations

Base humour, Michelle Pfeiffer, a beer and I’m done👌

(I know what you're thinking, especially after yesterday's debacle, but really, both the agency and I thought WTF at the time, I only translate what they give me, and it was only in her head ...),

And in 18 minutes here in Wales we enter a 17-day “circuit breaker”, aka Lockdown 2: Return of the Eery Quiet.

and also almost 4K, which - on Friday - after a few "modifications", has suddenly blossomed into more like 6K, and they "haven't finished it yet", so that's 6K and counting.

I think I might spend it with Michelle.

For Monday?

Turn up da Fokkahs

You understand me, my customer said.

Any movie.

"I do," said I, "but do you understand me?

Any of dem. Sublime.

How much do you understand me?

How he does that badass squint, we'll never know.

And by "how much", I don't mean how much do you understand me.

Talk to me, Bob.

I mean money, honey."

Are you talkin' to me?

But she understood.

I said,

Or I hope she did.

Sinister weekend gift

Whatever way it goes, I'm in for a shite weekend.

I can hardly type, I'm so pissed off with everything, but watch, if you will, from 2.30, with all the musicians merrily musicianing, but look at tortured Eric among them at 2.15 just before he starts in again.

Local time: 05:41

I don't know much about Eric's life, but you can tell from his face it wasn't all wine and roses.

Directives await

The House of the Rising Sun:

And until they are dealt with, I'm looking forward to reading today's diary entries.

Record sleeve

Meanwhile, yesterdays headlines include "EU shuts door to travel from Canada amid surge of infections".

Dang, Mervyn, I was looking forward to seeing a tortured expression on someone else's face for a change but all I see is a record sleeve!

So much for our flattened curve...

Sleep

Local time: 10:41

Is what I need. Good night.

It's Friday and...

And from minute 0:10 in The Animals video, on reflection, and certainly after 0:30.

I have to get it off my chest...

All of it, in fact.

Mervyn, I'm sorry for hijacking your diary!

Music to be frightened by ...

There was a time I believed coronavirus would change people for the better, but I was wrong.

And so to bed, because the Basques have just said I have to go to bed, and they're right.

People have changed, yes, but... for the worse.

Especially since last Saturday I got them up for breakfast at the usual time, and they said What, you crazy foridgener, this is Saturday,

In real or virtual places, I keep seeing no respect for others.

WTF, you've got all morning to go and buy the clams for the rice, so put that frigging duvet back over us frigging sharpish, will you?

We have a professional and personal responsibility to be civil and show respect and kindness for others at all times.

I should have stood up for myself, of course, but in the heat of the moment I clean forgot.

This is not what I see these last years everywhere, including Portugal (sometimes, I think I don't know my country anymore).

Have a pleasant weekend, everyone. I won't.

And this is not what I saw yesterday in one of the threads of this website.

Německo

The lack of respect, intrusion in private life, and unfair treatment are the worst traits that the human being can show.

(2007)

Nobody's perfect, but we can keep try and trying to be better every day, myself included!

nizozemština němčina

Yes, I have many faults.

I´m afraid but ...

I will be waiting as well for reading the "next chapter" of the diary!

to go to Lidl supermarket. Let me see if I find the Knorr pea soup I miss El Corte Inglés (on the other side of the Douro River), but I am quite far to go there.

It's not hijacking ...

... you won´t, because it is not produced anymore since 2018.

... Exy, it's called contributing, not hijacking.

But this evening I had this canned kind of pea soup I only can recommend:

"Sorry" doesn't apply ...

https://www.erasco.de/produkte/eintoepfe/vegetarisch/erbsen-eintopf-vegetarisch-vegetarisch/

For what it's worth, I finished off my Day Off (jeez, the solid-state bollocks I'm going to have to print out tomorrow ..., but I won't - can't - do it now) at El Corte Inglés.

Perhaps it will be engraved in tiles as well in 50 years or so.

Four o'clock is the perfect time to go to El Corte Inglés.

The soup was served with German Schnaps, this one:

All the mammas and pappas either go before that, or after.

http://www.fuerstbismarck-kornbrand.de/home.php

I know my hugely amiable female friends at the meat and cheese counter could tell I'd been crying (the mask concentrates your gaze on the eyes, I see that now), and were wondering why, but they're too nice and polite to ask why, and I didn't explain.

Ja, it seems that I turn out to be of one of these hidden and f\*\*\*ing German nationalists now, but believe me, they don´t care for old fashioned pea soup and Schnaps:

They didn't ask why because why would they, and I couldn't have explained it to them or to myself anyway.

They eat Kebap Döner all the day and drink Corona Extra or Vodka and have no notion about Bismarck and why he better solely should have burnt Schnaps than ... but that´s a different story to discuss in another kind of forum.

Now I'm going to do what I never do at 5 pm, and that's watch a film I recorded a few days ago, because what I want, no, need, to do is laugh -

And I can´t help, but I believe: can´t we just agree here altogether, that no one else but only Mervyn should be allowed to call Exy as "Exy"?

"Analyze That", with my ultimate hero, Robert de Niro.

Thank you.

And I hope you like that rhyme, too, because I do.

Pea cream ready-made

Oh look, there's another one ...

Matthias Brombach wrote:

Bad guy, good guy, funny guy, even good guy with occasional badassness (Mad Dog and Glory),

They eat Kebap Döner all the day and drink Corona Extra or Vodka and have no notion about Bismarck and why he better should have burnt Schnaps than ... but that´s a different story to discuss in another kind of forum.

Robert can do them all.

Dear Mattias, I don't understand German.

In the admittedly unlikely event you're reading this,

I once had a German very funny student who tried to teach me, but he was a better student than me.

Bob (can I call you Bob, like Scorsese does?), if you're ever in Bilbao, I'll be your interpreter for free, plus I know a few locales you'll like.

I used to teach kids and teenagers (foreign and Portuguese students) when I finished my studies.

And I know "Analyze That"'s not as good as "Analyze This", but I'm told it's a free country, so I think what I like.

Your language is powerful in terms of sounds and quite beautiful, but I am a disaster!

My turn

Here, we have pea soup ready-made: "creme de ervilhas" (pea cream)

to go to Lidl supermarket.

https://www.lidl.pt/pt/novidades/eu-e-que-descobri/as-sopas-do-lidl

Let me see if I find the Knorr pea soup I miss El Corte Inglés (on the other side of the Douro River), but I am quite far to go there.

Kebab Doner we also have it here, and many more, but I prefer Portuguese food.

Enjoy Robert de Niro movie!

No Corona, please!

I go for Al Pacino...

No, we have agreed that Mervyn and everyone can call me "Exy", according to my "godfather" (if I can call him that),

Exy...

Don Chris S.

What a considerate, compassionate, absolutely lovely, and all-round excellent young woman you are.

Our dear P.L.F.Persio has already called me by that name this week.

I have to say it on a public forum like this.

So, everyone is entitled to use "Exy"

Life's too short not to tell someone how honoured I am I met them, even if it sounds lovey-dovey and schmaltzy.

Thanks, Matthias

I don't care.

06:50

And Mervyn, don't let the bastards grind you down.

For more info on German food.

We may not know you well enough to be called your friends, but we can see who you are, we see you.

I'll be back with that info.

Mmh, that sounds a bit creepy... but you get it, right?

Sooner than you know.

I don't know how to insert a blushing smiley here...

I lazily let the word "wavies" drop.

Life's too short not to tell someone how honoured I am I met them, even if it sounds lovey-dovey and schmaltzy. I don't care.

I can say no more ...

I am speechless and blushing... but I feel I am writing to a lovely young lady who can be also described with these kind words above.

But the wavies are far away right now.

The honour is all mine to meet you

Time to get serious.

By now, Mervyn is watching Robert de Niro, probably eating a cheese toast with some new and savoury Spanish herbs he doesn't know yet and trying to "Analyse That"

Right now it's 8.30 am, and I've been up since 7.

Family

The Basques quite rightly put me to bed early last night.

Not everything de Niro touches turns to gold, we watched one called The Family recently, a mob “comedy”, which was horrendous... but also brilliant because his wife was Michelle Pfeiffer, who was always my dream woman and has only got better with age.

With very little protest.

Of course, his defining role will always be, no not Taxi Driver, as a Fokker.

I thought they were worried about me, but then they said something about me having to be on the ball on Saturday to do the chickpeas with beef.

Call me a pleb, a philistine, I don’t care.

Basques.

Base humour, Michelle Pfeiffer, a beer and I’m done👌

Always food. WTF is it with the Basques?

And in 18 minutes here in Wales we enter a 17-day “circuit breaker”, aka Lockdown 2: Return of the Eery Quiet.

I literally could not type by the end of yesterday, but I'm fine today.

I think I might spend it with Michelle.

Good job, because what do I find this morning?

Turn up da Fokkahs

What I find is the 6K of blaargh I have to do by Monday.

Any movie.

Rush rate.

Any of dem. Sublime.

Written by the head of culture at an undisclosed place of culture.

How he does that badass squint, we'll never know.

You can imagine the thinly veiled bullshit in there, can't you?

Talk to me, Bob.

But, undaunted, I've been conveying bullshit for an hour or so now, and I find it comes naturally.

Are you talkin' to me?

Yes, I can hear you laughing, don't think I can't.

I said,

But I like people to laugh, and I hate it when people cry.

Sinister weekend gift

Talking of crying, to wit, the last sentence I just translatored:

I can hardly type, I'm so pissed off with everything, but watch, if you will, from 2.30, with all the musicians merrily musicianing, but look at tortured Eric among them at 2.15 just before he starts in again.

A fear that grips the present and future of our existence.

I don't know much about Eric's life, but you can tell from his face it wasn't all wine and roses.

Jesus H.C.

The House of the Rising Sun:

It's all like that, too.

Record sleeve

He (she?) is talking about the Disease of the Moment, of course,

Dang, Mervyn, I was looking forward to seeing a tortured expression on someone else's face for a change but all I see is a record sleeve!

Covid. I hope it's a he, though.

Sleep

It makes it much easier for me to loathe him, because I wouldn't have the #MeToo brigade on my back.

Is what I need. Good night.

So I'm going to be here for a while.

And from minute 0:10 in The Animals video, on reflection, and certainly after 0:30.

Going down for the paper in a bit. Hopefully that bloody zebra won't be around.

All of it, in fact.

A propos de rien

Music to be frightened by ...

Oct 24

And so to bed, because the Basques have just said I have to go to bed, and they're right.

A sandwich walks into a bar, and the barman says: Sorry, we don't serve food.

Especially since last Saturday I got them up for breakfast at the usual time, and they said What, you crazy foridgener, this is Saturday,

Local time: 09:47

WTF, you've got all morning to go and buy the clams for the rice, so put that frigging duvet back over us frigging sharpish, will you?

The common good

I should have stood up for myself, of course, but in the heat of the moment I clean forgot.

Still here, working the blaargh for the common good. Page 4, and I come up against:

Have a pleasant weekend, everyone. I won't.

Cohabitation during the lockdown served to strengthen bonds and complicities.

Německo

It did, did it?

(2007)

Maybe it did in your ivory tower, moosh. For a week or too, maybe.

nizozemština němčina

Then we got tired of all the balcony-clapping, and went back to the usual dog-eat-dog.

I´m afraid but ...

Well, I need a rest from all that before I hit page 5, and I realise I never gave my analysis of that Gang of Four at the table the other night.

to go to Lidl supermarket. Let me see if I find the Knorr pea soup I miss El Corte Inglés (on the other side of the Douro River), but I am quite far to go there.

It's still in the pipeline, but even so I don't have enough time right now.

... you won´t, because it is not produced anymore since 2018.

Tell you what, I'll split it, and leave some of it for later, especially since I'm making this tosh up as I go along.

But this evening I had this canned kind of pea soup I only can recommend:

By making it up, I mean figuring out how to say it, not that it never happened, because it did, and not that it was important either, but it was just a slice of life taken up from a bar in Bilbao this week:

https://www.erasco.de/produkte/eintoepfe/vegetarisch/erbsen-eintopf-vegetarisch-vegetarisch/

They were all thirty-somethings, and the three blokes all looked like Iggy Pop, but I mean Iggy Pop when he was their age, all long hair and brash loudness.

Perhaps it will be engraved in tiles as well in 50 years or so.

Don't get me wrong, I like Iggy Pop, and I could listen to The Passenger all day long at full volume, but I was just intrigued that all three of them looked and sounded like him.

The soup was served with German Schnaps, this one:

The reason the three of them were so loud was because they were all vying for the attentions of their companion, a very pretty girl in a very, very short tartan skirt.

http://www.fuerstbismarck-kornbrand.de/home.php

So short, in fact, I idly wondered why she had even bothered with it at all.

Ja, it seems that I turn out to be of one of these hidden and f\*\*\*ing German nationalists now, but believe me, they don´t care for old fashioned pea soup and Schnaps:

That's not judgment, by the way, just a comment.

They eat Kebap Döner all the day and drink Corona Extra or Vodka and have no notion about Bismarck and why he better solely should have burnt Schnaps than ... but that´s a different story to discuss in another kind of forum.

Me, I was happy with her ultra-short skirt, but not as happy as the three blokes were.

And I can´t help, but I believe: can´t we just agree here altogether, that no one else but only Mervyn should be allowed to call Exy as "Exy"?

Actually, I do know why she wore it.

Thank you.

She wore it because, as every schoolboy leafing through the panties and bra section of mum's mail-order catalogue knows, semi-nudity is infinitely more of a turn-on than actual nakedness.

Pea cream ready-made

Be that as it may, gentleman that I am, I concentrated on them rather than her when she got up to go to the bog, and if ever I saw a lewd, lascivious, lusting look, it was right there on all three faces watching her depart.

Matthias Brombach wrote:

That same night the Basques and I also visited the Residence, which isn't actually Bilbao's official Irish bar, because that distinction in this town is proudly held by Michael's The Wicklow Arms, which holds the world (?) record for pints poured per square metre, but that's not hard because the place can only measure up to about ten square metres, but The Residence does Guinness, so it does, and it had been ages since I'd had the black gold, so in we went.

They eat Kebap Döner all the day and drink Corona Extra or Vodka and have no notion about Bismarck and why he better should have burnt Schnaps than ... but that´s a different story to discuss in another kind of forum.

I know what you're think¡ng, don't think I don't, you know, but no, I haven't finished with Missy and her trio of drooling acolytes, I was merely digressing to confuse you.

Dear Mattias, I don't understand German.

More about them and the Residence next time.

I once had a German very funny student who tried to teach me, but he was a better student than me.

Meanwhile, back to the do-goodery ...

I used to teach kids and teenagers (foreign and Portuguese students) when I finished my studies.

Sandwich

Your language is powerful in terms of sounds and quite beautiful, but I am a disaster!

Ace!

Here, we have pea soup ready-made: "creme de ervilhas" (pea cream)

Finally

https://www.lidl.pt/pt/novidades/eu-e-que-descobri/as-sopas-do-lidl

@Thomas Frost

Kebab Doner we also have it here, and many more, but I prefer Portuguese food.

Well, it took a while, but you'll be pleased to know the Merchants of Blaargh got there in the end, Thomas.

No Corona, please!

I was wondering when it would emerge.

No, we have agreed that Mervyn and everyone can call me "Exy", according to my "godfather" (if I can call him that),

We've already had the "going forward", the "necessary parameters and/or criteria" (wot???), so it was only a matter of time, and eventually it turned up, on page six of eleven:

Don Chris S.

This paradigm we yearn for, however, entails risks that may lead to errors and failure.

Our dear P.L.F.Persio has already called me by that name this week.

Paradigm?

So, everyone is entitled to use "Exy"

Gagging for it, mate.

Thanks, Matthias

And I mean really yearning, going forward.

06:50

A pint of your best paradigm, squire, we're parched here.

For more info on German food.

All around

I'll be back with that info.

The inspiration, I mean. It's all around.

Sooner than you know.

Certainly all around Bilbao.

I lazily let the word "wavies" drop.

Driving me to distraction, this city is.

I can say no more ...

I went out to buy some shaving foam, that's all I was going to do, I swear, because I have like a week's growth due to the constant blaargh, and I hate that, and so do the Basques, because they reckon it affects my cooking (get the connection?

But the wavies are far away right now.

no, neither do I, but it's always the cooking with the Basques, always the cooking), and I got the foam and even shaved and all, feeling rather Sean Connery as I looked at myself in the mirror and said "The name's Henderson.

Time to get serious.

Mervyn Henderson".

Right now it's 8.30 am, and I've been up since 7.

Then I realised I'd forgotten the fucking spuds, so I had to go out again, and I thought I'll call in at Bar Baviera just beside the fruit and veg shop (always a dangerous option, even though it's changed hands now).

The Basques quite rightly put me to bed early last night.

Would you effing believe it, squire.

With very little protest.

The most mundane tales are always the best.

I thought they were worried about me, but then they said something about me having to be on the ball on Saturday to do the chickpeas with beef.

Because it was at Juan and Jon's old bar that I discovered the truth of the Black Witch and the Disgraced Bank Manager.

Basques.

Actually, I knew most of it already, but the South American behind the bar didn't, and were the Black Witch and I ready to tell her?

Always food. WTF is it with the Basques?

Of course we were.

I literally could not type by the end of yesterday, but I'm fine today.

Rhetorical question. Until next time.

Good job, because what do I find this morning?

Along with the Gang of Four.

What I find is the 6K of blaargh I have to do by Monday.

And Trump.

Rush rate.

And the next wavies bullshit. How the hell can I get any work done today?

Written by the head of culture at an undisclosed place of culture.

Local time: 04:47

You can imagine the thinly veiled bullshit in there, can't you?

Companion recipe blog request

But, undaunted, I've been conveying bullshit for an hour or so now, and I find it comes naturally.

Looking forward to all of these promised plot/character developments, but in the meantime have you considered a Basque recipe blog as a companion to the main dish?

Yes, I can hear you laughing, don't think I can't.

I am dying to know how to cook beef and chick peas!!

But I like people to laugh, and I hate it when people cry.

So you think you can tell?

Talking of crying, to wit, the last sentence I just translatored:

Heaven from hell, I mean. Blue skies from pain.

A fear that grips the present and future of our existence.

It was stupid of me.

Jesus H.C.

There I was, halfway through the mindlessly mindless blaargh, and what did I do?

It's all like that, too.

I put on Wish You Were Here, that's what I did.

He (she?) is talking about the Disease of the Moment, of course,

I never played it to her, why would I put on Pink Floyd for her, but my mother would have loved it, I know.

Covid. I hope it's a he, though.

Not that she was a child of the sixties, more like the thirties or forties, but I know she would have loved it, she was so modern in her old age, surfing the Internet and sending out e-mails to all and sundry.

It makes it much easier for me to loathe him, because I wouldn't have the #MeToo brigade on my back.

An utterly modern woman, even in her 90s.

So I'm going to be here for a while.

I always think of my dear mother when I hear Wish You Were Here.

Going down for the paper in a bit. Hopefully that bloody zebra won't be around.

Credits, the Pinkies.

A propos de rien

Anyone who has ever lost anyone cannot fail to weep when "how I wish you were here" kicks in.

Oct 24

He only sings it once and the rest is all doo-di-doo-doo, but once is more than enough:

A sandwich walks into a bar, and the barman says: Sorry, we don't serve food.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXdNnw99-Ic

Local time: 09:47

But I think that's the guilt kicking in.

The common good

I looked after my mother remotely for years, going over there so many times I was practically on first-name terms with the people at the M1 motorway toll booth near Dundalk, and then I brought her over here to live.

Still here, working the blaargh for the common good. Page 4, and I come up against:

Or to die, rather.

Cohabitation during the lockdown served to strengthen bonds and complicities.

And I thought about killing my mother once, God forgive me.

It did, did it?

More than once, in fact.

Maybe it did in your ivory tower, moosh. For a week or too, maybe.

And once so terribly, so terribly it tortures me to this very day.

Then we got tired of all the balcony-clapping, and went back to the usual dog-eat-dog.

Not ten metres from where I sit, in fact, I thought about it, when I was bringing her back in her wheelchair from an outing to Doña Casilda's park in Bilbao.

Well, I need a rest from all that before I hit page 5, and I realise I never gave my analysis of that Gang of Four at the table the other night.

The house was quiet as I wrenched her wheelchair out of the lift.

It's still in the pipeline, but even so I don't have enough time right now.

Of course it was quiet. It was Easter weekend.

Tell you what, I'll split it, and leave some of it for later, especially since I'm making this tosh up as I go along.

She'd fallen asleep on the way back. I wheeled the chair to the door.

By making it up, I mean figuring out how to say it, not that it never happened, because it did, and not that it was important either, but it was just a slice of life taken up from a bar in Bilbao this week:

And then I saw the stairwell.

They were all thirty-somethings, and the three blokes all looked like Iggy Pop, but I mean Iggy Pop when he was their age, all long hair and brash loudness.

We have a really fucking steep stairwell in this house, you know.

Don't get me wrong, I like Iggy Pop, and I could listen to The Passenger all day long at full volume, but I was just intrigued that all three of them looked and sounded like him.

Really dangerous.

The reason the three of them were so loud was because they were all vying for the attentions of their companion, a very pretty girl in a very, very short tartan skirt.

One false move with a wheelchair, for example, ... you get my meaning.

So short, in fact, I idly wondered why she had even bothered with it at all.

I say again, God forgive me, I thought about it, I thought about it once, I thought about it twice, and maybe even thrice, and I even looked at my sleeping mother, I gave myself all the excuses, and thought, What odds, she's starting to lose it, yesterday she thought you were the nurse, FFS.

That's not judgment, by the way, just a comment.

Not that she had been a bad mum, though.

Me, I was happy with her ultra-short skirt, but not as happy as the three blokes were.

Quite the contrary.

Actually, I do know why she wore it.

Actually, if she had been a bad mum, that would have made it so much easier, but unfortunately she'd been the best mum anyone could have.

She wore it because, as every schoolboy leafing through the panties and bra section of mum's mail-order catalogue knows, semi-nudity is infinitely more of a turn-on than actual nakedness.

I know you think it's awful, but I also know that out there certain people understand what I'm saying...

Be that as it may, gentleman that I am, I concentrated on them rather than her when she got up to go to the bog, and if ever I saw a lewd, lascivious, lusting look, it was right there on all three faces watching her depart.

Suddenly mum woke up and yawned a long yawn.

That same night the Basques and I also visited the Residence, which isn't actually Bilbao's official Irish bar, because that distinction in this town is proudly held by Michael's The Wicklow Arms, which holds the world (?) record for pints poured per square metre, but that's not hard because the place can only measure up to about ten square metres, but The Residence does Guinness, so it does, and it had been ages since I'd had the black gold, so in we went.

"So, are we going in or what, son?"

I know what you're think¡ng, don't think I don't, you know, but no, I haven't finished with Missy and her trio of drooling acolytes, I was merely digressing to confuse you.

My iron grip on the wheelchair loosened, and I imagine that my features also relaxed.

More about them and the Residence next time.

"Sure we are, Mum.

Meanwhile, back to the do-goodery ...

Sure we are."

Sandwich

B\*\*\*r the blaargh

Ace!

Oct 25

Finally

Yes, bother the blaargh again.

@Thomas Frost

Sorry to repeat myself, but this weekend's blaargh is getting personal.

Well, it took a while, but you'll be pleased to know the Merchants of Blaargh got there in the end, Thomas.

And the Basques left me yesterday.

I was wondering when it would emerge.

They left me.

We've already had the "going forward", the "necessary parameters and/or criteria" (wot???), so it was only a matter of time, and eventually it turned up, on page six of eleven:

You think I'm crying for nothing?

This paradigm we yearn for, however, entails risks that may lead to errors and failure.

Of course I'm not.

Paradigm?

"We're leaving," they said, "We're leaving now."

Gagging for it, mate.

The awful truth dawned on me.

And I mean really yearning, going forward.

I sat bolt upright.

A pint of your best paradigm, squire, we're parched here.

"No," I said, "Don't go.

All around

Don't leave me now, baby.

The inspiration, I mean. It's all around.

Don't go.

Certainly all around Bilbao.

Don't go away.

Driving me to distraction, this city is.

Please don't go. I'm down on my knees.

I went out to buy some shaving foam, that's all I was going to do, I swear, because I have like a week's growth due to the constant blaargh, and I hate that, and so do the Basques, because they reckon it affects my cooking (get the connection?

Begging you please, please, please, don't go-o-o-o, don't go, don't go away, please don't go."

no, neither do I, but it's always the cooking with the Basques, always the cooking), and I got the foam and even shaved and all, feeling rather Sean Connery as I looked at myself in the mirror and said "The name's Henderson.

"The fuck?" they said.

Mervyn Henderson".

Well, the equivalent in Spanish, I mean.

Then I realised I'd forgotten the fucking spuds, so I had to go out again, and I thought I'll call in at Bar Baviera just beside the fruit and veg shop (always a dangerous option, even though it's changed hands now).

"We're leaving. We're leaving for the supermarket.

Would you effing believe it, squire.

Need anything?"

The most mundane tales are always the best.

"No," I said, "I don't need anything".

Because it was at Juan and Jon's old bar that I discovered the truth of the Black Witch and the Disgraced Bank Manager.

But I was lying, of course.

Actually, I knew most of it already, but the South American behind the bar didn't, and were the Black Witch and I ready to tell her?

I didn't need anything, no.

Of course we were.

What I needed was everything.

Rhetorical question. Until next time.

By the way, you can use that line if you like, sonny.

Along with the Gang of Four.

Yes, you, lad.

And Trump.

What, you think I didn't see you lurking behind that computer, reading my shit?

And the next wavies bullshit. How the hell can I get any work done today?

Oh, please.

Local time: 04:47

Seriously?

Companion recipe blog request

Don't look behind you like you reckon I mean someone else, like you don't believe I'm talking about you, young translator.

Looking forward to all of these promised plot/character developments, but in the meantime have you considered a Basque recipe blog as a companion to the main dish?

And you can shake your fucking head at me just as long as you like, but I know who you are.

I am dying to know how to cook beef and chick peas!!

Who you are is me thirty years ago, and you're eying up that attractive girl you've just seen across the bar, so listen to me.

So you think you can tell?

The line works, believe me.

Heaven from hell, I mean. Blue skies from pain.

The "I don't need anything, honey, what I need is everything" line works every time.

It was stupid of me.

Even if you're ugly!!

There I was, halfway through the mindlessly mindless blaargh, and what did I do?

Nobody knows why, but it does.

I put on Wish You Were Here, that's what I did.

Chickpeas and beef

I never played it to her, why would I put on Pink Floyd for her, but my mother would have loved it, I know.

Thanks for asking, Alexandra.

Not that she was a child of the sixties, more like the thirties or forties, but I know she would have loved it, she was so modern in her old age, surfing the Internet and sending out e-mails to all and sundry.

Henderson's Bilbao Chickpeas 'n' Beef is actually quite simple.

An utterly modern woman, even in her 90s.

Since I'm making it, it has to be:

I always think of my dear mother when I hear Wish You Were Here.

Take two or three Basques.

Credits, the Pinkies.

Don't concern yourself with quantit¡es, though: it can be more Basques or fewer, but never less, because we don't want to get ourselves tominlondoned here, do we, no, ha-ha.

Anyone who has ever lost anyone cannot fail to weep when "how I wish you were here" kicks in.

Use any excuse you can, cajoling, teasing, lying, whatever, but lead your Basques to anywhere except the kitchen.

He only sings it once and the rest is all doo-di-doo-doo, but once is more than enough:

Henderson Tip:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXdNnw99-Ic

One thing that always works is to mention food.

But I think that's the guilt kicking in.

Any kind of food.

I looked after my mother remotely for years, going over there so many times I was practically on first-name terms with the people at the M1 motorway toll booth near Dundalk, and then I brought her over here to live.

Really.

Or to die, rather.

It can be the roast lamb you had last week, the couscous a friend recommended, or a fucking ham sandwich, it doesn't matter, but whatever it is, by God they'll have an opinion on it, and they'll be talking about it and texting about it and WhatSapping about it for ages.

And I thought about killing my mother once, God forgive me.

So, that's them good and out of your way for at least half an hour.

More than once, in fact.

I'll tell you the rest later.

And once so terribly, so terribly it tortures me to this very day.

Although I'm kind of piling up the stuff for later.

Not ten metres from where I sit, in fact, I thought about it, when I was bringing her back in her wheelchair from an outing to Doña Casilda's park in Bilbao.

There's Home Alone VI, there's the Gang of Four Part Two, and a few others.

The house was quiet as I wrenched her wheelchair out of the lift.

Plus the blaargh.

Of course it was quiet. It was Easter weekend.

God, it's awful.

She'd fallen asleep on the way back. I wheeled the chair to the door.

Why do you think I'm on the forums?

And then I saw the stairwell.

Tread, trod, trodden

We have a really fucking steep stairwell in this house, you know.

I'm pretty sure we never learned our own verbs like that, infinitive and participles, but sometimes the Basques come out with that, as they remember how they learned English verbs - go, went, gone - see, saw, seen - catch, caught, caught ...

Really dangerous.

Just 2,307 words left to translate today.

One false move with a wheelchair, for example, ... you get my meaning.

Actually, there's more, but the 2+K is the urgent stuff.

I say again, God forgive me, I thought about it, I thought about it once, I thought about it twice, and maybe even thrice, and I even looked at my sleeping mother, I gave myself all the excuses, and thought, What odds, she's starting to lose it, yesterday she thought you were the nurse, FFS.

And what prime bollocks it is too.

Not that she had been a bad mum, though.

Today I had to look up the participles of a verb, the verb "to tread", because both trod and trodden sounded fine to me.

Quite the contrary.

There are certain translations I'm not proud of, and believe me I'm doing my best to make myself very unproud of the current blaargh.

Actually, if she had been a bad mum, that would have made it so much easier, but unfortunately she'd been the best mum anyone could have.

"Exploring paths hitherto untrod ...", I had written (oh yes, it's Bullshit with a capital B, this).

I know you think it's awful, but I also know that out there certain people understand what I'm saying...

But I reckoned it was untrodden, not untrod.

Suddenly mum woke up and yawned a long yawn.

"As if it mattered, Mervyn," a little voice said to me, except it sounded like my own voice, and by Jesus, it was.

"So, are we going in or what, son?"

"Nobody's ever going to read this tedious bollocks.

My iron grip on the wheelchair loosened, and I imagine that my features also relaxed.

In Spanish or in English."

"Sure we are, Mum.

The sad part is that I actually said that to myself, as I noticed the word "untrod".

Sure we are."

"Oh, Mervyn,"

B\*\*\*r the blaargh

Mervyn said to me, "untrod" is a little too short to go at the end in such a short sentence, and no main verb either, but that's what happens when they give some dickhead a Poetic Licence."

Oct 25

"And," the voice went on, "untrodden" draws it out a little more, balances it, you know."

Yes, bother the blaargh again.

Sadder still is that I agreed with myself, and even nodded to no one as I typed out this arseholery.

Sorry to repeat myself, but this weekend's blaargh is getting personal.

Even sadder was saying

And the Basques left me yesterday.

Thanks for that, Mervyn.

They left me.

But the saddest bit of all was smiling wryly and hearing a harsh Northern Ireland accent saying

You think I'm crying for nothing?

Don't mention it, Mervyn.

Of course I'm not.

Sunday, bloody Sunday

"We're leaving," they said, "We're leaving now."

Just listened to PM Sánchez on the radio, and I suppose he'll be all over the 3 pm news in half an hour or so, to announce the six-month lockdown here.

The awful truth dawned on me.

Six months.

I sat bolt upright.

With a curfew between 11 pm and 5 am, from what I hear.

"No," I said, "Don't go.

Well, that's just bloody marvellous, innit.

Don't leave me now, baby.

Just as I was going to wrap up this Diary.

Don't go.

I was, you know.

Don't go away.

Once I'd sorted out Trump.

Please don't go. I'm down on my knees.

But now they up and lock us down again, so you know what you're in for, doncha?

Begging you please, please, please, don't go-o-o-o, don't go, don't go away, please don't go."

Me, that's what.

"The fuck?" they said.

Me.

Well, the equivalent in Spanish, I mean.

For months and bloody months.

"We're leaving. We're leaving for the supermarket.

Local time: 08:47

Need anything?"

I hope it doesn't last too long

"No," I said, "I don't need anything".

Sadly, I also tuned in to Galician television while I was having my lunch and listened the same...

But I was lying, of course.

Let's hope this lockdown by 9th May doesn't last too long.

I didn't need anything, no.

Things can change for the better, and I'm confident!

What I needed was everything.

We gotta get out of this place

By the way, you can use that line if you like, sonny.

Except now we can't.

Yes, you, lad.

We might be in lockdown again, but I was smart, let me tell you.

What, you think I didn't see you lurking behind that computer, reading my shit?

I learned from the meaningless blaargh below, and turned a contretemps into an opportunity.

Oh, please.

I just told the Basques:

Seriously?

"Would you Adam and Eve it?

Don't look behind you like you reckon I mean someone else, like you don't believe I'm talking about you, young translator.

Lockdown.

And you can shake your fucking head at me just as long as you like, but I know who you are.

Dammit, now I have to cancel that luxury holiday on a tropical island I booked for us only yesterday."

Who you are is me thirty years ago, and you're eying up that attractive girl you've just seen across the bar, so listen to me.

Not sure if they fell for it.

The line works, believe me.

But they were unrelenting, of course:

The "I don't need anything, honey, what I need is everything" line works every time.

"OK, but make sure you steep the red beans for tomorrow for eight hours, and no more than eight," was all they said.

Even if you're ugly!!

There's only one item on the Basque Agenda.

Nobody knows why, but it does.

The blaargh read thusly, or it does now een theee Eeengleesh:

Chickpeas and beef

"This, therefore, is a unique opportunity, which we neither expected nor asked for, but which places us before the mirror we used to shun with some discomfort."

Thanks for asking, Alexandra.

Shun?

Henderson's Bilbao Chickpeas 'n' Beef is actually quite simple.

Can you even shun a mirror?

Since I'm making it, it has to be:

I can't remember ever shunning a mirror.

Take two or three Basques.

Maybe you eschew a mirror.

Don't concern yourself with quantit¡es, though: it can be more Basques or fewer, but never less, because we don't want to get ourselves tominlondoned here, do we, no, ha-ha.

But eschew is a verb I don't know how to use.

Use any excuse you can, cajoling, teasing, lying, whatever, but lead your Basques to anywhere except the kitchen.

So I might not use it.

Henderson Tip:

Or I might even shun it.

One thing that always works is to mention food.

Or eschew it.

Any kind of food.

And thus we attain new levels of boredom.

Really.

Not my idea of boredom, though.

It can be the roast lamb you had last week, the couscous a friend recommended, or a fucking ham sandwich, it doesn't matter, but whatever it is, by God they'll have an opinion on it, and they'll be talking about it and texting about it and WhatSapping about it for ages.

As you know.

So, that's them good and out of your way for at least half an hour.

When I bore you, you stay bored and you know you've been bored.

I'll tell you the rest later.

Which sounds kind of kinky, now I read it over again, but let's get on, shall we.

Although I'm kind of piling up the stuff for later.

O, the awful bollocks we must needs translate.

There's Home Alone VI, there's the Gang of Four Part Two, and a few others.

When is a curfew not a curfew?

Plus the blaargh.

Oct 27

God, it's awful.

When it's a "nocturnal mobility restriction", that's when.

Why do you think I'm on the forums?

The PM made that clear, so thanks for that, Pedro.

Tread, trod, trodden

Yes, there I was, thinking "we can't go out between 11 pm and 6 am here because of the curfew", but all the time the reality was that we can't go out between 11 pm and 6 am here because of the nocturnal mobility restriction.

I'm pretty sure we never learned our own verbs like that, infinitive and participles, but sometimes the Basques come out with that, as they remember how they learned English verbs - go, went, gone - see, saw, seen - catch, caught, caught ...

And, in a separate move, yesterday the Basque Government added its own restriction, so we can't leave our own town except for a good reason, or leave the Basque Country, even.

Just 2,307 words left to translate today.

I've more or less got my workload under control again, and the rush should be over by around Thursday.

Actually, there's more, but the 2+K is the urgent stuff.

Thank God for that.

And what prime bollocks it is too.

It was beginning to get me down no end.

Today I had to look up the participles of a verb, the verb "to tread", because both trod and trodden sounded fine to me.

Home Alone will be late, too ... least of my worries, that.

There are certain translations I'm not proud of, and believe me I'm doing my best to make myself very unproud of the current blaargh.

More restrictive measures most likely...

"Exploring paths hitherto untrod ...", I had written (oh yes, it's Bullshit with a capital B, this).

There was I thinking we couldn't go out between 11 pm and 6 am here because of the curfew, but actually the reality is that we can't go out between 11 pm and 6 am because of the nocturnal mobility restriction.

But I reckoned it was untrodden, not untrod.

Curfew may be mandatory in Portugal.

"As if it mattered, Mervyn," a little voice said to me, except it sounded like my own voice, and by Jesus, it was.

The country recorded the highest daily rate of new cases of infection since the beginning of the pandemic last week.

"Nobody's ever going to read this tedious bollocks.

My sister told me that the old settings of the hospital where she works is reserved only for Covid-19 patients, and it is a very big area.

In Spanish or in English."

Also, I can't leave from here and go to Porto on November, 1st, All Saints' Day.

The sad part is that I actually said that to myself, as I noticed the word "untrod".

We aren't allowed to go to other cities.

"Oh, Mervyn,"

I am glad you have your workload under control.

Mervyn said to me, "untrod" is a little too short to go at the end in such a short sentence, and no main verb either, but that's what happens when they give some dickhead a Poetic Licence."

Rachel Fell

"And," the voice went on, "untrodden" draws it out a little more, balances it, you know."

Local time: 14:06

Sadder still is that I agreed with myself, and even nodded to no one as I typed out this arseholery.

francouzština

Even sadder was saying

language

Thanks for that, Mervyn.

"nocturnal mobility restriction"

But the saddest bit of all was smiling wryly and hearing a harsh Northern Ireland accent saying

As so often, why use one word when you can use three?

Don't mention it, Mervyn.

Some awful terminology has arisen from the current "pandemic" situation.

Sunday, bloody Sunday

A language is more powerful than we think

Just listened to PM Sánchez on the radio, and I suppose he'll be all over the 3 pm news in half an hour or so, to announce the six-month lockdown here.

"If you are in quaranteam you are a covidiot".

Six months.

This sentence conveys an important message, and it is reinforcing something in the same way as the "restricción de la movilidad nocturna" or "toque de queda" whichever we would like to use.

With a curfew between 11 pm and 5 am, from what I hear.

Even though coronavirus neologisms or new expressions sound a bit strange, they can educate "insane" people to be self-disciplined.

Well, that's just bloody marvellous, innit.

A language is always evolving, changing, and adapting to the needs of its users.

Just as I was going to wrap up this Diary.

This "viral language" is the best example of that.

I was, you know.

I hope it is playing an important role in this global fight against the spread of this horrible "bug".

Once I'd sorted out Trump.

Some new words can be awful, but they can be powerful, too.

But now they up and lock us down again, so you know what you're in for, doncha?

Local time: 15:06

Me, that's what.

Johnny Holiday

Me.

Oct 28

For months and bloody months.

Ahead of All Saints’ Day on Sunday, much moaning to be heard, although mostly up the coast in Gipuzkoa, for obvious reasons.

Local time: 08:47

The obvious reasons are the foreigners - the French, to be precise.

I hope it doesn't last too long

The Basque Government has no authority to close an international border despite the restrictions, and so over they come in droves, but it’s one-way traffic only, from there to here, because here people aren’t allowed to leave their own town, let alone cross any borders.

Sadly, I also tuned in to Galician television while I was having my lunch and listened the same...

The French usually come over here for Toussaint but this time, as someone said in the newspaper,

Let's hope this lockdown by 9th May doesn't last too long.

“What, the Frogs can come over here, not even for work or nuffink, with no justification, and not even have to stop at the border in Irún, and can go on down to Donostia or Hondarribia, while I can’t leave Irún?”

Things can change for the better, and I'm confident!

And they weren’t here for work, either, because they were slugging back the vino and pintxos like nobody’s business in Donostia, by all accounts.

We gotta get out of this place

Dear me.

Except now we can't.

That’s Johnny Foreigner for you. He comes over here, he drinks all our txakoli and he eats all our pintxos.

We might be in lockdown again, but I was smart, let me tell you.

Still, those Gauls have to watch themselves with the time, if they’re here in the evening.

I learned from the meaningless blaargh below, and turned a contretemps into an opportunity.

Curfew time is 10 pm back in France, or so I hear, whereas it’s 11 pm here, so they have to either leg it back to France by about 9.30, or they’re looking at paying for a hotel on this side of the border.

I just told the Basques:

That, or a 3,000 euro fine, is it, in France (?), when they get back across the border?

"Would you Adam and Eve it?

Not that leaving early will be a problem for the French because they’re kind of used to that.

Lockdown.

As anyone knows who’s made the journey from Irún to Hendaye around 7 or 8 in the evening, for example, the difference in atmosphere between two towns only a few kilometres apart across a river is abysmal - Hendaye is already like a ghost town by that time, whereas Irún is still alive with people everywhere.

Dammit, now I have to cancel that luxury holiday on a tropical island I booked for us only yesterday."

But it might not be so lively around here on the Day of the Dead this year anyway.

Not sure if they fell for it.

Q: When are the homeless not homeless?

But they were unrelenting, of course:

A: When they have a home to go to.

"OK, but make sure you steep the red beans for tomorrow for eight hours, and no more than eight," was all they said.

I'd forgotten about this one:

There's only one item on the Basque Agenda.

In March all those sleeping in shop doorways and bank vestibules were rounded up and taken to shelters for the duration.

The blaargh read thusly, or it does now een theee Eeengleesh:

Not this time, though, because, in the dubious and post-event wisdom of the powers-that-be, when they're in that shop doorway or curled up beside that ATM under their cardboard, they're officially "at home", aren't they?

"This, therefore, is a unique opportunity, which we neither expected nor asked for, but which places us before the mirror we used to shun with some discomfort."

Portugal is a joke

Shun?

We can't visit a loved one's grave, but we can have 30,000 "Fangios" watching Formula One races, or see more than the allowed number of passengers in public transport, etc.

Can you even shun a mirror?

(2008)

I can't remember ever shunning a mirror.

Loved one

Maybe you eschew a mirror.

I hate the expression "Loved One".

But eschew is a verb I don't know how to use.

I first became aware of it in Evelyn Waugh's satirical novel, published in 1948, which he entitled "The Loved One" - using the expression with heavy irony, as part of his sarcastic, disapproving debunk of the American commercialisation and packaging of funerals.

So I might not use it.

Alas, since then that horrible expression has been absorbed into British English as well - but I would never use it myself.

Or I might even shun it.

... a bit hasty, that first comment of mine.

Or eschew it.

I see Tom was really only thinking about Waugh's satire, not stirring with what Exy said.

And thus we attain new levels of boredom.

And I liked Waugh, too.

Not my idea of boredom, though.

I suspect "loved ones" is probably overused in these Corona times, that's all.

As you know.

When I bore you, you stay bored and you know you've been bored.

A virtual hug

Which sounds kind of kinky, now I read it over again, but let's get on, shall we.

Tom, I’m sending you a virtual hug.

O, the awful bollocks we must needs translate.

Tom, let me rephrase it:

When is a curfew not a curfew?

"I can't visit my mother's grave, but we can have 30,000 "Fangios" watching Formula One races, or see more than the allowed number of passengers in public transport, etc."

Oct 27

But I agree with you, I don't like the term "love" or any derivative word, because it is a word that everyone uses, but no one can really show it.

When it's a "nocturnal mobility restriction", that's when.

It's alright, I understood you.

The PM made that clear, so thanks for that, Pedro.

You were only explaining how the expression came into British English.

Yes, there I was, thinking "we can't go out between 11 pm and 6 am here because of the curfew", but all the time the reality was that we can't go out between 11 pm and 6 am here because of the nocturnal mobility restriction.

No problem at all with that. I appreciate it. It's something new I learned today.

And, in a separate move, yesterday the Basque Government added its own restriction, so we can't leave our own town except for a good reason, or leave the Basque Country, even.

"Nearest and dearest"?

I've more or less got my workload under control again, and the rush should be over by around Thursday.

Oct 29

Thank God for that.

Is that better or worse on the Yeeugh Scale?

It was beginning to get me down no end.

Rather contrived?

Home Alone will be late, too ... least of my worries, that.

Repellent?

More restrictive measures most likely...

Should we have a poll?

There was I thinking we couldn't go out between 11 pm and 6 am here because of the curfew, but actually the reality is that we can't go out between 11 pm and 6 am because of the nocturnal mobility restriction.

Beware

Curfew may be mandatory in Portugal.

No problem at all with that. I appreciate it.

The country recorded the highest daily rate of new cases of infection since the beginning of the pandemic last week.

It's something new I learned today.

My sister told me that the old settings of the hospital where she works is reserved only for Covid-19 patients, and it is a very big area.

Just make sure you take Tom’s English lessons with a pinch of salt.

Also, I can't leave from here and go to Porto on November, 1st, All Saints' Day.

His recommendations are often far from conventional.

We aren't allowed to go to other cities.

I have no problem at all with “loved one”.

I am glad you have your workload under control.

No, I wasn't

Rachel Fell

No, I wasn't. I don't know how the expression "loved one" came into British English and I certainly wasn't explaining it.

Local time: 14:06

I imagine it's by the same kind of cultural subservience that caused the past participle of "to get" ("gotten") to be (a) exported to American English in the 16th century (b) re-imported into British English in the 21st century.

francouzština

Or a different variant of the same cultural subservience that has caused the adjective "everyday" to acquire the same meaning as "every day".

language

This has become an everyday offence. I see it used every day.

"nocturnal mobility restriction"

Or again, another variant that has enabled "momentarily" (meaning: for a moment) to acquire the completely different meaning "in a moment".

As so often, why use one word when you can use three?

Or the term "to deprecate" to become "to depreciate" (the latter, I suspect, caused by illiterate American computer geeks who have never deprecated anything).

Some awful terminology has arisen from the current "pandemic" situation.

I deprecate all of it.

A language is more powerful than we think

Ho hum.

"If you are in quaranteam you are a covidiot".

As it's now going on for midday I shall be having my lunch in a moment - but not momentarily because I like to eat slowly and chew on my food.

This sentence conveys an important message, and it is reinforcing something in the same way as the "restricción de la movilidad nocturna" or "toque de queda" whichever we would like to use.

I will get used to it

Even though coronavirus neologisms or new expressions sound a bit strange, they can educate "insane" people to be self-disciplined.

Thanks, Chris, I know that, and I will get used to it.

A language is always evolving, changing, and adapting to the needs of its users.

Honestly, I'm more interested in reading Mervyn's diary which is something that has delighted us to this day than knowing what Tom hates or loves.

This "viral language" is the best example of that.

Although I appreciate some new information like the one he indicated above.

I hope it is playing an important role in this global fight against the spread of this horrible "bug".

I'm sorry, "I'm with the olive oils", and I hope Tom will hate this expression.

Some new words can be awful, but they can be powerful, too.

For colleagues who are interested in idioms like me:

Local time: 15:06

http://lisbonlanguagecafe.pt/funny-portuguese-phrases/

Johnny Holiday

Check out those Portuguese expressions!

Oct 28

Thanks for the link, Exy.

Ahead of All Saints’ Day on Sunday, much moaning to be heard, although mostly up the coast in Gipuzkoa, for obvious reasons.

Very amusing - it's always double the fun when you translate them literally into another language, isn't it?

The obvious reasons are the foreigners - the French, to be precise.

I don't know about her olive oils, but others might have "spent many years turning chickens", or "turning the record over and playing the same song", I'm not sure which.:-)

The Basque Government has no authority to close an international border despite the restrictions, and so over they come in droves, but it’s one-way traffic only, from there to here, because here people aren’t allowed to leave their own town, let alone cross any borders.

Not only in British English

The French usually come over here for Toussaint but this time, as someone said in the newspaper,

Or a different variant of the same cultural subservience that has caused the adjective "everyday" to acquire the same meaning as "every day". This has become an everyday offence. I see it used every day.

“What, the Frogs can come over here, not even for work or nuffink, with no justification, and not even have to stop at the border in Irún, and can go on down to Donostia or Hondarribia, while I can’t leave Irún?”

Certainly, this doesn't happen only in English, but in other languages as well.

And they weren’t here for work, either, because they were slugging back the vino and pintxos like nobody’s business in Donostia, by all accounts.

For example, "contract" which is written in Portuguese as "contrato" is often seen as "contraCto", the verb "to extend" which is "estender" is seen several times as "eXtender", and so on.

Dear me.

These are grammar (lexical) errors, of course. I could give you many other examples.

That’s Johnny Foreigner for you. He comes over here, he drinks all our txakoli and he eats all our pintxos.

I share the same feeling, believe me.

Still, those Gauls have to watch themselves with the time, if they’re here in the evening.

The term "loved ones" is something that sounds natural for me in English or in other languages I know ("os entes queridos" (PT); "les bien-aimés (FR)"; "los entes queridos" (ES)).

Curfew time is 10 pm back in France, or so I hear, whereas it’s 11 pm here, so they have to either leg it back to France by about 9.30, or they’re looking at paying for a hotel on this side of the border.

The expression came from Latin most likely and then coined in English.

That, or a 3,000 euro fine, is it, in France (?), when they get back across the border?

If it isn't the right term in British English that's another story that only you as a native speaker can explain.

Not that leaving early will be a problem for the French because they’re kind of used to that.

Local time: 18:15

As anyone knows who’s made the journey from Irún to Hendaye around 7 or 8 in the evening, for example, the difference in atmosphere between two towns only a few kilometres apart across a river is abysmal - Hendaye is already like a ghost town by that time, whereas Irún is still alive with people everywhere.

ah yes

But it might not be so lively around here on the Day of the Dead this year anyway.

Ah yes - you've just reminded me of all those Italians who say "aereoporto" or "areoporto" instead of "aeroporto".

Q: When are the homeless not homeless?

Horrible !

A: When they have a home to go to.

Local time: 19:15

I'd forgotten about this one:

Aero

In March all those sleeping in shop doorways and bank vestibules were rounded up and taken to shelters for the duration.

NOT that it's got anything to do with it, Tom

Not this time, though, because, in the dubious and post-event wisdom of the powers-that-be, when they're in that shop doorway or curled up beside that ATM under their cardboard, they're officially "at home", aren't they?

- tenuous to say the least, considering what you said about aeroporto and the rest, and I should really know better because I received a stern though friendly and indeed encouraging warning today, from a person whose identity I'm not at liberty to disclose, to stop dilly-dallying on the forums (it wasn't you, just in case you were wondering)

Portugal is a joke

- but I might be expected to have a little, just a little leeway on my own thread, mightn't I, or maybe better might I not

We can't visit a loved one's grave, but we can have 30,000 "Fangios" watching Formula One races, or see more than the allowed number of passengers in public transport, etc.

- I'm getting to the nub of the issue now, it's just around Dilly-Dally Corner

(2008)

- but, since you're in the UK, do they still sell Aeros over there?

Loved one

The airy chocolate bars over there, I mean. Minty also available, I remember, but by now they might have moved on to a toffee version too.

I hate the expression "Loved One".

There's a lot to be said for air, you know.

I first became aware of it in Evelyn Waugh's satirical novel, published in 1948, which he entitled "The Loved One" - using the expression with heavy irony, as part of his sarcastic, disapproving debunk of the American commercialisation and packaging of funerals.

I think it was Kay who mentioned the airiness of French croissants in relation to the price not long ago, and she was right, too.

Alas, since then that horrible expression has been absorbed into British English as well - but I would never use it myself.

I was stupid enough to mention Aero bars to the Basques once, and they just looked through me, one of those disdainful stares:

... a bit hasty, that first comment of mine.

"Chocolate interspersed with air?" was all they said, and they were about to go on about how grandma used to make her own chocolate down at the farmhouse, and how she was up in the morning even before she'd gone to bed to do so, and then she trapped out the mule to go down to the market and sell it to the punters, but I was already moving out of earshot by that stage.

I see Tom was really only thinking about Waugh's satire, not stirring with what Exy said.

Oreoporto

And I liked Waugh, too.

Speaking of chocolate, there was a time I heard someone saying this.

I suspect "loved ones" is probably overused in these Corona times, that's all.

There are people who can turn a complex word into another one more complex.

Francie

A virtual hug

(2018)

Tom, I’m sending you a virtual hug.

Oct 30

Tom, let me rephrase it:

Points to Mervyn who is clearly paying attention!

"I can't visit my mother's grave, but we can have 30,000 "Fangios" watching Formula One races, or see more than the allowed number of passengers in public transport, etc."

My ongoing rant regarding the superiority of French croissants first gained traction when a French food-processing firm was condemned in the media for increasing the price of a ready-made dish even though the ingredients weighed now less.

But I agree with you, I don't like the term "love" or any derivative word, because it is a word that everyone uses, but no one can really show it.

There was some kind of cream involved IIRC.

It's alright, I understood you.

Instead of just slopping some cream on the top of the dessert as before, they whipped it up using a special device, making it lighter and airier and decidedly more heavenly.

You were only explaining how the expression came into British English.

Because they still served the dessert in the same little plastic cup, you ended up with less cream, although that cream took up the same amount of space.

No problem at all with that. I appreciate it. It's something new I learned today.

It was most disconcerting to find myself on the side of the processing firm, since I'm more of a cook-from-scratch.

"Nearest and dearest"?

So to justify my stance, I found myself ranting about the Importance of Air in French Cuisine, and to my credit I managed a fair list of dishes in which air is of the utmost importance:

Oct 29

mousse au chocolat, crème Chantilly, croissants et autres viennoiseries, baguette, brioche, soufflé, fraisier/framboisier, meringue, Emmental (not Gruyère), champagne et autres vins mousseux, all fermented dishes...

Is that better or worse on the Yeeugh Scale?

Fun fact: for the cheese, amateurs will discern a slightly different taste in the cheese immediately adjacent to each hole compared to the more solid parts.

Rather contrived?

Something to do with the particular gas released by bacteria during fermentation.

Repellent?

Coupled with the strange not-quite-smoothness of each hole, this makes for an especially wonderful experience.

Should we have a poll?

As proof that I am not alone in thinking this, portions from the inner part of an Emmental wheel are usually considerably more expensive than from the outer part near the rind, because the inner part is where most of the holes are.

Beware

Again, you're paying more for the presence of air.

No problem at all with that. I appreciate it.

Cheesy

It's something new I learned today.

Emmental

Just make sure you take Tom’s English lessons with a pinch of salt.

Were this the frivolous thread rather than the deadly serious virus thread, I would be sorely tempted to point out here that Emmental has no more a place in a list of airy French foods than Champagne does in a list of fine Irish wines.

His recommendations are often far from conventional.

I thought everybody knew that Emmental comes from the German-speaking part of Yorkshire?

I have no problem at all with “loved one”.

Luxury!

No, I wasn't

Whenever we wanted cheese, we used to lick a block of chalk.

No, I wasn't. I don't know how the expression "loved one" came into British English and I certainly wasn't explaining it.

And don't get me started on double cream.

I imagine it's by the same kind of cultural subservience that caused the past participle of "to get" ("gotten") to be (a) exported to American English in the 16th century (b) re-imported into British English in the 21st century.

I'm here all week.

Or a different variant of the same cultural subservience that has caused the adjective "everyday" to acquire the same meaning as "every day".

Some class comments there!!!

This has become an everyday offence. I see it used every day.

This air stuff reminds me a totally fictitious episode which didn't happen years and years ago, when I ran into The Man in the Pub.

Or again, another variant that has enabled "momentarily" (meaning: for a moment) to acquire the completely different meaning "in a moment".

Nowadays I'm much more careful where I go and where I sit and whom I enter into conversation with, but at the time it seemed that The Man in the Pub always sat down next to me, and he always wanted to spout his own hot air for free about the State of the Country and a long etc.

Or the term "to deprecate" to become "to depreciate" (the latter, I suspect, caused by illiterate American computer geeks who have never deprecated anything).

Well, for free - it always came at a cost to my poor earhole, but on this occasion I got mighty tired of being talked at, rather than to, meaning that his mouth was much too close to mine, and he didn't smell too good either, so I politely asked him to leave me alone, whereupon he said grumpily while breaking wind in the most horrendous way, "I was just airing my views, that's all."

I deprecate all of it.

"More like airing your booze," I retorted, and that's when the trouble started.

Ho hum.

I won't go into details about the unpleasant scene that ensued at The Jolly Farmer, but when the police were called and PC Plod was taking my statement, I told him I hadn't started the violence.

As it's now going on for midday I shall be having my lunch in a moment - but not momentarily because I like to eat slowly and chew on my food.

"I don't believe in it," I told him.

I will get used to it

"All I used were words.

Thanks, Chris, I know that, and I will get used to it.

As everyone knows, the pen is mightier than the sword."

Honestly, I'm more interested in reading Mervyn's diary which is something that has delighted us to this day than knowing what Tom hates or loves.

"So there was a sword involved?" he asked.

Although I appreciate some new information like the one he indicated above.

"This is more serious than I thought.

I'm sorry, "I'm with the olive oils", and I hope Tom will hate this expression.

I didn't see any sword. Come to think of it, nobody's said anything about a pen either.

For colleagues who are interested in idioms like me:

Did you take a pen to him, sir?"

http://lisbonlanguagecafe.pt/funny-portuguese-phrases/

Well, I would go on, but I've got a job to do here before I take the day off to wrap up Home Alone, or at least continue it. More hot air there, too.

Check out those Portuguese expressions!

(2003)

Thanks for the link, Exy.

francouzština italština

Very amusing - it's always double the fun when you translate them literally into another language, isn't it?

For you Tom

I don't know about her olive oils, but others might have "spent many years turning chickens", or "turning the record over and playing the same song", I'm not sure which.:-)

From Accademia della Crusca

Not only in British English

https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/consulenza/aereo-ma-aeroporto-perché/76#:~:text=È%20più%20giusto%20scrivere%20aereoporto,in%20aeronautica,%20aerosol,%20aerostato.

Or a different variant of the same cultural subservience that has caused the adjective "everyday" to acquire the same meaning as "every day". This has become an everyday offence. I see it used every day.

Those curfew blues

Certainly, this doesn't happen only in English, but in other languages as well.

"France on terrorist alert" is, of course, the upper heading in the rag today in the wake of the terrible events up there in Nice.

For example, "contract" which is written in Portuguese as "contrato" is often seen as "contraCto", the verb "to extend" which is "estender" is seen several times as "eXtender", and so on.

But let's remember this is a provincial paper (I don't mean that in a bad way), and down below - in slightly larger letters - it's "Very tough days ahead - let's be responsible", a quote from a joint statement by eight of Bizkaia province's mayors calling for calm.

These are grammar (lexical) errors, of course. I could give you many other examples.

I'm not sure whether this came out before or after the disturbances in Bilbao last night, though.

I share the same feeling, believe me.

Anti-curfew protesters overturned street rubbish containers and set them alight in many parts of the centre.

The term "loved ones" is something that sounds natural for me in English or in other languages I know ("os entes queridos" (PT); "les bien-aimés (FR)"; "los entes queridos" (ES)).

I was looking at the names of the streets, which all seemed to be around here, but my street seems to have been left out.

The expression came from Latin most likely and then coined in English.

Not that I'm complaining.

If it isn't the right term in British English that's another story that only you as a native speaker can explain.

I've seen containers overturned on this street before and set on fire, albeit for other reasons, and it's not a pretty sight.

Local time: 18:15

Scuffles with the police down the road in Plaza Indautxu, and several arrests made.

ah yes

Plus ... today I was out and about, and saw an oldish man sitting on the pavement with a cap out in front of him.

Ah yes - you've just reminded me of all those Italians who say "aereoporto" or "areoporto" instead of "aeroporto".

They usually have a little sign saying "I need help", "I have three children", "Please give me some money for food", but this man's sign was Tragic with a capital T.

Horrible !

Just three words. "No tengo nada".

Local time: 19:15

On my way back I felt I had to give something to someone who says he has nothing.

Aero

You've got to feel wretched and desperate to have a sign out in front of you saying that.

NOT that it's got anything to do with it, Tom

Not that I'm a saint, or blowing a trumpet for myself or anyone or anything, and maybe it's not the way to go.

- tenuous to say the least, considering what you said about aeroporto and the rest, and I should really know better because I received a stern though friendly and indeed encouraging warning today, from a person whose identity I'm not at liberty to disclose, to stop dilly-dallying on the forums (it wasn't you, just in case you were wondering)

Sometimes I give and sometimes I don't but I tell you, because you know I'm a cynic, I'd sooner give it directly to him than to some organisation with a lot of hands potentially dipping into cookie jars.

- but I might be expected to have a little, just a little leeway on my own thread, mightn't I, or maybe better might I not

It's a wonderful world.

- I'm getting to the nub of the issue now, it's just around Dilly-Dally Corner

Winding down to the weekend (wot, no smart-alec title?)

- but, since you're in the UK, do they still sell Aeros over there?

I know I go on about this, but I took the rest of the day off.

The airy chocolate bars over there, I mean. Minty also available, I remember, but by now they might have moved on to a toffee version too.

Even refused a job.

There's a lot to be said for air, you know.

Sorry, loads of urgent work, I said, lying through my teeth.

I think it was Kay who mentioned the airiness of French croissants in relation to the price not long ago, and she was right, too.

For the minute, 11K to do in 10 days seems like a good plan to me, so I'm relaxing.

I was stupid enough to mention Aero bars to the Basques once, and they just looked through me, one of those disdainful stares:

This kind of diary stuff helps me relax, but lately only when I don't have tiresome though money-earning blaargh before, after and during it.

"Chocolate interspersed with air?" was all they said, and they were about to go on about how grandma used to make her own chocolate down at the farmhouse, and how she was up in the morning even before she'd gone to bed to do so, and then she trapped out the mule to go down to the market and sell it to the punters, but I was already moving out of earshot by that stage.

I'm convinced there is a kind of latent second-wave unease creeping into a lot of people subconsciously, though.

Oreoporto

It's just that there's never any good news anywhere anymore.

Speaking of chocolate, there was a time I heard someone saying this.

Last night I was watching what's usually a rather amusing chat show (El Hormiguero, if you're over here), and amusing was what I wanted.

There are people who can turn a complex word into another one more complex.

After a very funny interview with a former singer/actress now 70 years old (María Jiménez - they all become singer-actresses in the end ...), and obviously on some sort of medication by the way she moved and looked and acted, but still very sharp in her repartee, four more or less well-known funnies came on, and suddenly it all developed into a Corona debate, amid laughter with some of the things they said, but I couldn't watch Corona again after the Corona News.

Francie

Yes, I know what you're thinking, this from the OP of the Corona quarantine diary, but I don't like what I'm seeing.

(2018)

I do try to keep upbeat, but I just see that it's been day after day for so long now, it seems like 7+ years rather than 7+ months.

Oct 30

Do you, like me, keep seeing people on TV and in the press shaking hands, kissing muah-muah, rubbing up to each other with no masks in sight, and think "What, how can they DO that ...?

Points to Mervyn who is clearly paying attention!

oh right, this is pre-spring 2020 stuff ..."?

My ongoing rant regarding the superiority of French croissants first gained traction when a French food-processing firm was condemned in the media for increasing the price of a ready-made dish even though the ingredients weighed now less.

And, on that very subject ... I mentioned the container-burning here last night.

There was some kind of cream involved IIRC.

People are angry.

Instead of just slopping some cream on the top of the dessert as before, they whipped it up using a special device, making it lighter and airier and decidedly more heavenly.

But it might be because of a certain gala dinner a few days ago, organised by a Spanish newspaper.

Because they still served the dessert in the same little plastic cup, you ended up with less cream, although that cream took up the same amount of space.

People went wild when footage was released of at least three government ministers, various opposition spokespersons and other well-known personalities, 80 of them - 80!

It was most disconcerting to find myself on the side of the processing firm, since I'm more of a cook-from-scratch.

- with no masks, no distancing and, you can be pretty sure, none of them paying a cent for anything, all sitting around at their tables in some hotel (restaurant?

So to justify my stance, I found myself ranting about the Importance of Air in French Cuisine, and to my credit I managed a fair list of dishes in which air is of the utmost importance:

not sure).

mousse au chocolat, crème Chantilly, croissants et autres viennoiseries, baguette, brioche, soufflé, fraisier/framboisier, meringue, Emmental (not Gruyère), champagne et autres vins mousseux, all fermented dishes...

These are our leaders and the ones who want to replace them as our leaders?, thought The People, no matter what side of the political fence they were on, and The People were right.

Fun fact: for the cheese, amateurs will discern a slightly different taste in the cheese immediately adjacent to each hole compared to the more solid parts.

Some of the party people (in both senses) apologised later, some tried to justify the measures taken, but more of them said nothing at all.

Something to do with the particular gas released by bacteria during fermentation.

On a more positive note, and yes, I do go on about it too, I'm determined to get Home Alone Part VI (was it?) out at the weekend.

Coupled with the strange not-quite-smoothness of each hole, this makes for an especially wonderful experience.

I've got to start getting rid of Donald before he gets rid of me.

As proof that I am not alone in thinking this, portions from the inner part of an Emmental wheel are usually considerably more expensive than from the outer part near the rind, because the inner part is where most of the holes are.

Maybe meantime other people will get rid of him next week!

Again, you're paying more for the presence of air.

I might need a Part VII for that, but it's still up in the air.

Cheesy

By the way, Tom, you never answered me about the Aero bars.

Emmental

Or I think you didn't.

Were this the frivolous thread rather than the deadly serious virus thread, I would be sorely tempted to point out here that Emmental has no more a place in a list of airy French foods than Champagne does in a list of fine Irish wines.

Have a good weekend, everyone!!

I thought everybody knew that Emmental comes from the German-speaking part of Yorkshire?

Home Alone VI (Ménage à Trois - but not as you know it ...)

Luxury!

Oct 31

Whenever we wanted cheese, we used to lick a block of chalk.

“Say, Henderson, what the hell got into you back then?” said Trump when I emerged from the JFK wavies.

And don't get me started on double cream.

“Sorry, sorry, Don, it’s just something I can’t control.

I'm here all week.

It’s …”

Some class comments there!!!

I broke off as a shadow appeared behind him and … my God, if it wasn’t FLOTUS in person, personally, and up close and personal too.

This air stuff reminds me a totally fictitious episode which didn't happen years and years ago, when I ran into The Man in the Pub.

Very up close and personal.

Nowadays I'm much more careful where I go and where I sit and whom I enter into conversation with, but at the time it seemed that The Man in the Pub always sat down next to me, and he always wanted to spout his own hot air for free about the State of the Country and a long etc.

In a sheer dress.

Well, for free - it always came at a cost to my poor earhole, but on this occasion I got mighty tired of being talked at, rather than to, meaning that his mouth was much too close to mine, and he didn't smell too good either, so I politely asked him to leave me alone, whereupon he said grumpily while breaking wind in the most horrendous way, "I was just airing my views, that's all."

Very sheer.

"More like airing your booze," I retorted, and that's when the trouble started.

Dresses don’t come much sheerer.

I won't go into details about the unpleasant scene that ensued at The Jolly Farmer, but when the police were called and PC Plod was taking my statement, I told him I hadn't started the violence.

I rubbed my eyes.

"I don't believe in it," I told him.

“Donald, love.

"All I used were words.

I’ve been looking …”, and then she saw me on screen.

As everyone knows, the pen is mightier than the sword."

“Oh, hello,” she smiled, as she put her hands on the back of Trump’s chair, leaned in, and gave him a loud smacker on the cheek.

"So there was a sword involved?" he asked.

“Hello, good evening, good afternoon, Mrs President Sir, Mrs First Lady Sir, Ma’am, Mrs Trump Sir, Mrs …” I babbled.

"This is more serious than I thought.

“Oh no,” she cooed.

I didn't see any sword. Come to think of it, nobody's said anything about a pen either.

“Melania will be fine.

Did you take a pen to him, sir?"

In fact, call me Mel. And you are …?”

Well, I would go on, but I've got a job to do here before I take the day off to wrap up Home Alone, or at least continue it. More hot air there, too.

“Mervyn, Ma’am, Mrs, Melania, Mel, Mrs, er … Mervyn.”

(2003)

She looked at her husband.

francouzština italština

“Donald.

For you Tom

Don’t be rude, honey.

From Accademia della Crusca

Aren’t you going to introduce us properly?”

https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/consulenza/aereo-ma-aeroporto-perché/76#:~:text=È%20più%20giusto%20scrivere%20aereoporto,in%20aeronautica,%20aerosol,%20aerostato.

It was then I noticed that Trump was fiddling with his hands, real nervous, eyes moving up, down, sideways:

Those curfew blues

“Sure, hon.

"France on terrorist alert" is, of course, the upper heading in the rag today in the wake of the terrible events up there in Nice.

A guy called Henderson.

But let's remember this is a provincial paper (I don't mean that in a bad way), and down below - in slightly larger letters - it's "Very tough days ahead - let's be responsible", a quote from a joint statement by eight of Bizkaia province's mayors calling for calm.

He’s giving me a hand with a few election tips.

I'm not sure whether this came out before or after the disturbances in Bilbao last night, though.

Consultancy.

Anti-curfew protesters overturned street rubbish containers and set them alight in many parts of the centre.

And, er … a few other things too.”

I was looking at the names of the streets, which all seemed to be around here, but my street seems to have been left out.

He looked at the nails on one hand, and then on the other.

Not that I'm complaining.

But it was the change in his voice I noticed most.

I've seen containers overturned on this street before and set on fire, albeit for other reasons, and it's not a pretty sight.

Remember when you were a kid at school, and you’d been caught running down the corridor, and the teacher bawled you out with “Why are you running, boy?

Scuffles with the police down the road in Plaza Indautxu, and several arrests made.

- Do you think it’s clever, boy?

Plus ... today I was out and about, and saw an oldish man sitting on the pavement with a cap out in front of him.

- Get off to class this minute, and WALK, boy,” and you just stood there, answering all that, saying “Don’t know, sir

They usually have a little sign saying "I need help", "I have three children", "Please give me some money for food", but this man's sign was Tragic with a capital T.

- No, sir - Yes, sir, sorry, sir” in that tiny, tiny, barely audible little voice as you stared wretchedly down at the floor?

Just three words. "No tengo nada".

Well, that was the tiny little voice I was hearing now from the most powerful man on the planet.

On my way back I felt I had to give something to someone who says he has nothing.

He went on: “He’s Irish, Mel, from Bilbao, in the Basque Country, in Spain, down Mexico way, and ...”

You've got to feel wretched and desperate to have a sign out in front of you saying that.

FLOTUS frowned.

Not that I'm a saint, or blowing a trumpet for myself or anyone or anything, and maybe it's not the way to go.

“Bilbao?

Sometimes I give and sometimes I don't but I tell you, because you know I'm a cynic, I'd sooner give it directly to him than to some organisation with a lot of hands potentially dipping into cookie jars.

Mexico?

It's a wonderful world.

Donald, dearest.

Winding down to the weekend (wot, no smart-alec title?)

Bilbao’s nowhere near Mexico.

I know I go on about this, but I took the rest of the day off.

It’s in the Basque Country, of course, but as for being in Spain, there’s some debate as to whether or not that’s the case.

Even refused a job.

The Basque Country is a territory nestling in the western Pyrenees, straddling two sovereign states, Spain and France, a situation that many years ago produced a rather odd arithmetical slogan by Basque nationalists, “3 + 4 = 1”, a reference to 3 provinces in one country and 4 provinces in the other, making up one indivisible whole.

Sorry, loads of urgent work, I said, lying through my teeth.

The language many Basques speak – though not all of them – is Europe’s oldest, and research has shown that …”

For the minute, 11K to do in 10 days seems like a good plan to me, so I'm relaxing.

Still in that tiny little voice, the Don jumped in:

This kind of diary stuff helps me relax, but lately only when I don't have tiresome though money-earning blaargh before, after and during it.

“Well, that’s basically what I just said, hon.

That’s what I meant.

I'm convinced there is a kind of latent second-wave unease creeping into a lot of people subconsciously, though.

It's just that there's never any good news anywhere anymore.

Don’t twist my words, dear.

Last night I was watching what's usually a rather amusing chat show (El Hormiguero, if you're over here), and amusing was what I wanted.

You know I get enough of that from the TV people here already, and ...”

After a very funny interview with a former singer/actress now 70 years old (María Jiménez - they all become singer-actresses in the end ...), and obviously on some sort of medication by the way she moved and looked and acted, but still very sharp in her repartee, four more or less well-known funnies came on, and suddenly it all developed into a Corona debate, amid laughter with some of the things they said, but I couldn't watch Corona again after the Corona News.

I had been looking at Mel and him in the Oval Office for a minute or so now, and then it dawned on me.

Yes, I know what you're thinking, this from the OP of the Corona quarantine diary, but I don't like what I'm seeing.

They were in the Oval Office.

I do try to keep upbeat, but I just see that it's been day after day for so long now, it seems like 7+ years rather than 7+ months.

Carpe diem, I thought.

Do you, like me, keep seeing people on TV and in the press shaking hands, kissing muah-muah, rubbing up to each other with no masks in sight, and think "What, how can they DO that ...?

To my left I started looking around for a link to that song, “How You Like Me Now”:

“Don, Don,” I said.

oh right, this is pre-spring 2020 stuff ..."?

“We’ve kind of been caught on the hop here, so I’m going to speed things up and send you that, er, that, thing, you know … the Clooney Nespresso Moment thing?

And, on that very subject ... I mentioned the container-burning here last night.

You have a device to, er, execute it on when you receive, right?

People are angry.

And you’ve still got your notes there, too, I suppose?

But it might be because of a certain gala dinner a few days ago, organised by a Spanish newspaper.

I’m going to e-mail it to you right now.

People went wild when footage was released of at least three government ministers, various opposition spokespersons and other well-known personalities, 80 of them - 80!

So what’s the e-mail?”

- with no masks, no distancing and, you can be pretty sure, none of them paying a cent for anything, all sitting around at their tables in some hotel (restaurant?

His eyes had lit up.

not sure).

He looked over at his wife.

These are our leaders and the ones who want to replace them as our leaders?, thought The People, no matter what side of the political fence they were on, and The People were right.

“Yeah, yeah, send it.

Some of the party people (in both senses) apologised later, some tried to justify the measures taken, but more of them said nothing at all.

The e-mail is makeamericagreatagain@themanincharge.com “

On a more positive note, and yes, I do go on about it too, I'm determined to get Home Alone Part VI (was it?) out at the weekend.

How typical, I thought.

I've got to start getting rid of Donald before he gets rid of me.

Meanwhile, Mel was stroking his hair:

Maybe meantime other people will get rid of him next week!

“Oh dear, Mr Henderson”, she sighed.

I might need a Part VII for that, but it's still up in the air.

“My Donald.

By the way, Tom, you never answered me about the Aero bars.

He’s really just a big softie when he’s with me, but when he’s out and about with all the press, Biden, Pelosi and the rest, the things he has to put up with from them, and he gets so riled, so violent … like a mobster, even.

Or I think you didn't.

Like … what was his name?

Have a good weekend, everyone!!

… oh yes, Al Capone.

Home Alone VI (Ménage à Trois - but not as you know it ...)

That was it.

Oct 31

Like Al Capone.”

“Say, Henderson, what the hell got into you back then?” said Trump when I emerged from the JFK wavies.

My eyes closed.

“Sorry, sorry, Don, it’s just something I can’t control.

“Oh no”, I said ...

It’s …”

Mel peered into the screen.

I broke off as a shadow appeared behind him and … my God, if it wasn’t FLOTUS in person, personally, and up close and personal too.

“Is anything the matter, Mr Henderson?

Very up close and personal.

You’ve gone all pale.”

In a sheer dress.

I just had time, but I had to act fast.

Very sheer.

“Don,” I said, I’ve sent you The Heavy.

Dresses don’t come much sheerer.

Do it.

I rubbed my eyes.

Do it now.

“Donald, love.

Execute the Nespresso Criterion.

I’ve been looking …”, and then she saw me on screen.

Execute.

“Oh, hello,” she smiled, as she put her hands on the back of Trump’s chair, leaned in, and gave him a loud smacker on the cheek.

This conversation has to terminate.”

“Hello, good evening, good afternoon, Mrs President Sir, Mrs First Lady Sir, Ma’am, Mrs Trump Sir, Mrs …” I babbled.

Mel looked from me to him and from him to me, confused.

“Oh no,” she cooed.

He was looking feverishly at another computer, clicking stuff.

“Melania will be fine.

“What’s going on?

In fact, call me Mel. And you are …?”

All I said was “like Al Capone” …”

“Mervyn, Ma’am, Mrs, Melania, Mel, Mrs, er … Mervyn.”

“Yes,” I groaned.

She looked at her husband.

“Like Alphonse Gabriel Capone.

“Donald.

Like Al Capone.

Don’t be rude, honey.

Like Scarface …”

Aren’t you going to introduce us properly?”

Hey, you can less it with the Scarface stuff.

It was then I noticed that Trump was fiddling with his hands, real nervous, eyes moving up, down, sideways:

Never liked that name.

“Sure, hon.

Nobody ever said that to my scarred face, pal.

A guy called Henderson.

And it wasn’t my fault I got cut, neither.

He’s giving me a hand with a few election tips.

Just because of a woman, too.

Consultancy.

A broad gets me sliced, how do you like that?

And, er … a few other things too.”

But it made me wake up, too, I gotta say.

He looked at the nails on one hand, and then on the other.

A lot of people don’t know Al Capone was originally a regular guy, just a nice kid running errands for Johnny Torrio, but he realized real soon he had to man the hell up, otherwise they were gonna stomp all over him.

But it was the change in his voice I noticed most.

Folks will tell you I’m a cold-hearted killer, but that’s not strictly true.

Remember when you were a kid at school, and you’d been caught running down the corridor, and the teacher bawled you out with “Why are you running, boy?

Oh, I’m a killer for sure, but I like to think I’m more of a warm-hearted killer.

- Do you think it’s clever, boy?

I try to throw in a little balance here and there, because wading through all the blood in a life of violent crime is difficult enough, so it’s good not to lose the human touch, a friendly word, a smile, a joke, a chuckle or two for people as you go about your business with them.

- Get off to class this minute, and WALK, boy,” and you just stood there, answering all that, saying “Don’t know, sir

Even you have to kill them, or whack them, as we say in the trade.

- No, sir - Yes, sir, sorry, sir” in that tiny, tiny, barely audible little voice as you stared wretchedly down at the floor?

You meet a lot of different people from all walks of life in this game.

Well, that was the tiny little voice I was hearing now from the most powerful man on the planet.

Different nationalities, too.

He went on: “He’s Irish, Mel, from Bilbao, in the Basque Country, in Spain, down Mexico way, and ...”

The Irish, now, the Irish are a cinch – you just give them a case of the laughing juice, and they do whatever you want.

FLOTUS frowned.

The Chinese, now they’re different, they’re dangerous.

“Bilbao?

You never know what they’re thinking.

Mexico?

And you sure as hell never know what they’re saying, because who the hell can make out all that Chinkie stuff?

Donald, dearest.

The Polacks, also.

Bilbao’s nowhere near Mexico.

All those guys.

It’s in the Basque Country, of course, but as for being in Spain, there’s some debate as to whether or not that’s the case.

All people from rough, tough countries who came here for a better life.

The Basque Country is a territory nestling in the western Pyrenees, straddling two sovereign states, Spain and France, a situation that many years ago produced a rather odd arithmetical slogan by Basque nationalists, “3 + 4 = 1”, a reference to 3 provinces in one country and 4 provinces in the other, making up one indivisible whole.

You don’t see no bankers, doctors and lawyers coming over here looking for the American dream.

The language many Basques speak – though not all of them – is Europe’s oldest, and research has shown that …”

My own parents, too, Gabriele and Teresina, they came over here.

Still in that tiny little voice, the Don jumped in:

He was a barber, and she was a dressmaker in the Old Country.

“Well, that’s basically what I just said, hon.

But you have to watch yourself with them as well, your own kind, the Italians.

That’s what I meant.

Take Carlo, for instance.

Don’t twist my words, dear.

Now Carlo was a kind of wise-ass from one of the families.

You know I get enough of that from the TV people here already, and ...”

Thought he was smarter and more in with the families than he was, and a bit of a joker too, like me.

I had been looking at Mel and him in the Oval Office for a minute or so now, and then it dawned on me.

Like I said, I appreciate a joke, except it’s always a better idea to let me do the

They were in the Oval Office.

Which is what Carlo found out, only sooner than he’d thought, but too late for him also.

Carpe diem, I thought.

You might have noticed I’m talking about Carlo in the past tense.

To my left I started looking around for a link to that song, “How You Like Me Now”:

Sure, because that’s what Carlo is, past tense, not around no more.

“Don, Don,” I said.

Let me tell you what happened to Carlo.

“We’ve kind of been caught on the hop here, so I’m going to speed things up and send you that, er, that, thing, you know … the Clooney Nespresso Moment thing?

I’ve got time.

You have a device to, er, execute it on when you receive, right?

I sure got the time.

And you’ve still got your notes there, too, I suppose?

I got plenty time.

I’m going to e-mail it to you right now.

I got a barrowload of time …

So what’s the e-mail?”

So one day I was standing with the guys beside my new Caddy.

His eyes had lit up.

I’d just bought it, and it looked swell, I’m telling you.

He looked over at his wife.

So then Carlo comes by all smarmy and smiley in a sharp suit and hat, and says, “Hey, Al, this your car?

“Yeah, yeah, send it.

This new?”

The e-mail is makeamericagreatagain@themanincharge.com “

And I say, “Sure, my brand new Caddy, I just picked it up, you like it or what, Carlo?”

How typical, I thought.

So he looks at it all kinda sly, like, and he says “Sure I like it, Al.

Meanwhile, Mel was stroking his hair:

I had one just like this, same color and all.

“Oh dear, Mr Henderson”, she sighed.

“You had one?” I says, real surprised.

“My Donald.

And then this punk just smiles and says, “Yeah, I had one, Al.

He’s really just a big softie when he’s with me, but when he’s out and about with all the press, Biden, Pelosi and the rest, the things he has to put up with from them, and he gets so riled, so violent … like a mobster, even.

Just for a while.

Like … what was his name?

Then my dad got a job.”

… oh yes, Al Capone.

And that was his big mistake, because not long after that Carlo found himself tied to a chair in a deserted warehouse.

That was it.

He wasn’t looking quite so smarmy no more.

Like Al Capone.”

That sharp suit was kinda torn and bloody too, and not much of a smile either.

My eyes closed.

His face sure didn’t look too good, because the guys had been with him for an hour or so before I arrived.

“Oh no”, I said ...

To soften him up a bit for me, see.

Mel peered into the screen.

So I takes a chair too, and I sits down in front of him, real close, but the wrong way round in the chair, with my arms on the back of it, the way we do.

“Is anything the matter, Mr Henderson?

Scares the crap out of them when you do that, I’ll say it does:

You’ve gone all pale.”

“Al, Al,” he sobs, “please don’t whack me, please.

I just had time, but I had to act fast.

It was just a joke, just a bit of a laugh.”

“Don,” I said, I’ve sent you The Heavy.

“Carlo, Carlo,” I says, all shocked and put out, like.

Do it.

“I know, I know.

Do it now.

I like a joke just like the next guy, no, really, I like all that, you know, jokes, riddles, funny stuff like that.

Execute the Nespresso Criterion.

Hey, tell you what we’ll do, Carlo:

Execute.

I’ll give you three riddles, and if you can figure them all out, you just apologize for your disrespect, because you know you have to do that, and then off you go, we’ll forget all about it.”

This conversation has to terminate.”

He looked up, still crying, but there was a bit of hope there now.

Mel looked from me to him and from him to me, confused.

“Sure, sure, I apologize, Al, I’m so, so sorry.

He was looking feverishly at another computer, clicking stuff.

You’ll let me go if I can guess the riddles?”

“What’s going on?

I spread my arms and threw my head back, the way we Italians do.

All I said was “like Al Capone” …”

“Listen to this guy!

“Yes,” I groaned.

Sure, Carlo.

“Like Alphonse Gabriel Capone.

Listen, have I ever lied to you?

Like Al Capone.

You’ll walk away, and it’ll be like it had never happened.

Like Scarface …”

So, here’s the first riddle.

Hey, you can less it with the Scarface stuff.

You ready?

Never liked that name.

OK, here goes:

Nobody ever said that to my scarred face, pal.

Why do dogs lick between their legs, Carlo?”

And it wasn’t my fault I got cut, neither.

He just looked at me.

Just because of a woman, too.

“Why do they … lick between their legs?

A broad gets me sliced, how do you like that?

Why …?

But it made me wake up, too, I gotta say.

I don’t know … because … because” – and then it came to him – “because they can?”

A lot of people don’t know Al Capone was originally a regular guy, just a nice kid running errands for Johnny Torrio, but he realized real soon he had to man the hell up, otherwise they were gonna stomp all over him.

I laughed.

Folks will tell you I’m a cold-hearted killer, but that’s not strictly true.

The guys laughed.

Even Carlo laughed a little.

Oh, I’m a killer for sure, but I like to think I’m more of a warm-hearted killer.

Hey, when the capo laughs, everyone laughs.

I try to throw in a little balance here and there, because wading through all the blood in a life of violent crime is difficult enough, so it’s good not to lose the human touch, a friendly word, a smile, a joke, a chuckle or two for people as you go about your business with them.

Even it ain’t funny.

Even you have to kill them, or whack them, as we say in the trade.

Just in case …

You meet a lot of different people from all walks of life in this game.

“Sure, Carlo, that’s why.

Different nationalities, too.

Because they can.

The Irish, now, the Irish are a cinch – you just give them a case of the laughing juice, and they do whatever you want.

Hey, we all would if we could, right?”

The Chinese, now they’re different, they’re dangerous.

More laughter.

You never know what they’re thinking.

“So, here’s the second one, Carlo:

And you sure as hell never know what they’re saying, because who the hell can make out all that Chinkie stuff?

Why was the beach wet?”

The Polacks, also.

“Wet, wet, why was it wet?

All those guys.

Because … because …” – and then his face lit up, all pleased with himself – “because the seaweed?”

All people from rough, tough countries who came here for a better life.

Well, we was all holding our sides by now, we were laughing so much.

You don’t see no bankers, doctors and lawyers coming over here looking for the American dream.

Carlo couldn’t because his hands were tied, of course, but he was nodding his head, and even giggling a bit too.

My own parents, too, Gabriele and Teresina, they came over here.

“Sure, because the seaweed!

He was a barber, and she was a dressmaker in the Old Country.

The sea weed!

But you have to watch yourself with them as well, your own kind, the Italians.

Hey, Carlo, you’re real good at this.

Take Carlo, for instance.

I reckon you’ve done this before, am I right?

Now Carlo was a kind of wise-ass from one of the families.

So, Carlo, here’s the last riddle, and you’re home and dry.

Thought he was smarter and more in with the families than he was, and a bit of a joker too, like me.

Dry.

Unlike that beach.”

Like I said, I appreciate a joke, except it’s always a better idea to let me do the

Jeez, everybody was splitting themselves, but not because I’m such a witty guy, of course, I’m not dumb.

Which is what Carlo found out, only sooner than he’d thought, but too late for him also.

“Here it is, Carlo … what has four eyes, but can’t see?”

You might have noticed I’m talking about Carlo in the past tense.

He stopped laughing real quick at that one.

Sure, because that’s what Carlo is, past tense, not around no more.

“Four eyes … but … can’t see?

Let me tell you what happened to Carlo.

Er, er, er, yes, er … oh yeah, I’ve got it, I’ve got it … four needles?”

I’ve got time.

Well, you should have seen the smile on my face at that one.

I sure got the time.

“Eyes of a needle, needle eyes, oh yeah, I get you.

I got plenty time.

Not bad, not bad, Carlo.

I got a barrowload of time …

But no cigar.

So one day I was standing with the guys beside my new Caddy.

You see, I said “What has”, not “What have”.

I’d just bought it, and it looked swell, I’m telling you.

Singular, you see.

So then Carlo comes by all smarmy and smiley in a sharp suit and hat, and says, “Hey, Al, this your car?

Not plural.

This new?”

So no, not four needles.”

And I say, “Sure, my brand new Caddy, I just picked it up, you like it or what, Carlo?”

He was breathing real hard now, so I gave him the answer:

So he looks at it all kinda sly, like, and he says “Sure I like it, Al.

“Mississippi, Carlos, the great American State of Mississippi.

I had one just like this, same color and all.

Mississippi has four Is, but it can’t see nuttin’.

“You had one?” I says, real surprised.

Do you get it now?”

And then this punk just smiles and says, “Yeah, I had one, Al.

He gasped a little.

Just for a while.

“Oh yes, yes, I get it”.

Then my dad got a job.”

“Sure you get it, Carlo.

And that was his big mistake, because not long after that Carlo found himself tied to a chair in a deserted warehouse.

Sure you do.

He wasn’t looking quite so smarmy no more.

You get it right now …”

That sharp suit was kinda torn and bloody too, and not much of a smile either.

Bang!

His face sure didn’t look too good, because the guys had been with him for an hour or so before I arrived.

You see?

To soften him up a bit for me, see.

I enjoy a joke.

So I takes a chair too, and I sits down in front of him, real close, but the wrong way round in the chair, with my arms on the back of it, the way we do.

You gotta laugh or you’ll cry, right?

Scares the crap out of them when you do that, I’ll say it does:

But Carlo had to go because he had no what we call “rispetto”.

“Al, Al,” he sobs, “please don’t whack me, please.

Sometimes the offences are worse, though.

It was just a joke, just a bit of a laugh.”

Everyone knows that snitches are the lowest of the low.

“Carlo, Carlo,” I says, all shocked and put out, like.

One day they brought in this punk to me who’d been talking to the Feds.

“I know, I know.

Lefty, his name was.

I like a joke just like the next guy, no, really, I like all that, you know, jokes, riddles, funny stuff like that.

He’d done a few runs for us now and again:

Hey, tell you what we’ll do, Carlo:

“Please, Al, there was nothing I could do.

I’ll give you three riddles, and if you can figure them all out, you just apologize for your disrespect, because you know you have to do that, and then off you go, we’ll forget all about it.”

They said they’d tell you I’d talked to them anyway.

He looked up, still crying, but there was a bit of hope there now.

They said I’d go to jail, my wife would lose her job, and my daughter might have a nasty accident on her way home from school.

“Sure, sure, I apologize, Al, I’m so, so sorry.

I had no choice, please.”

You’ll let me go if I can guess the riddles?”

I put my hand on his arm.

I spread my arms and threw my head back, the way we Italians do.

“Lefty, kid, I know that.

“Listen to this guy!

You were between a rock and a hard place, right?”

Sure, Carlo.

He nodded real fast up and down.

Listen, have I ever lied to you?

“You think I’m gonna whack you for talking to the Feds?

You’ll walk away, and it’ll be like it had never happened.

For snitching?

So, here’s the first riddle.

Hey, Lefty.

You ready?

What do you take me for, son?

OK, here goes:

I wouldn’t whack you for snitching.

Why do dogs lick between their legs, Carlo?”

No, no. Not me.

He just looked at me.

Me, I might whack you just because it’s Monday.

“Why do they … lick between their legs?

Say, Vito, what day is it today?”

Why …?

“It’s Monday, boss.”

I don’t know … because … because” – and then it came to him – “because they can?”

“So it is. Sure it is.” …

I laughed.

Sometimes I get confused, though - the week after that I’m sitting back at the same warehouse with another guy, but this guy had done something only slightly down from snitching.

The guys laughed.

Even Carlo laughed a little.

He’d been creaming off some of the takings, and that’s stealing from me.

Hey, when the capo laughs, everyone laughs.

Boy, was Freddo shivering.

Even it ain’t funny.

This was the Windy City all right, but he wasn’t trembling from the cold, and he was pleading for his life like all the others.

Just in case …

My own family, too, my own brother’s boy.

“Sure, Carlo, that’s why.

That’s what really hurt me:

Because they can.

“I didn’t do it, I swear, Uncle Al.

Hey, we all would if we could, right?”

On my mother’s grave, I swear I didn’t.

More laughter.

Don’t kill me, Al, please.”

“So, here’s the second one, Carlo:

I was so annoyed with my nephew because he was holding out on me, even now.

Why was the beach wet?”

I grabbed his lapels, and I kissed him real hard on the forehead.

“Wet, wet, why was it wet?

“I know you did it, Freddo, I know it was you!

Because … because …” – and then his face lit up, all pleased with himself – “because the seaweed?”

You broke my heart, Freddo, you broke my heart!”

Well, we was all holding our sides by now, we were laughing so much.

I screamed at him.

Carlo couldn’t because his hands were tied, of course, but he was nodding his head, and even giggling a bit too.

Yeah, I know it sounds weird.

“Sure, because the seaweed!

It’s one of those touchy-feely Italian things.

The sea weed!

You gotta admit it’s dramatic, though.

Hey, Carlo, you’re real good at this.

Wouldn’t surprise me if some director schmuck used that line in a movie some day.

I reckon you’ve done this before, am I right?

“Why, Freddo, why?” I went on.

So, Carlo, here’s the last riddle, and you’re home and dry.

“You know the kind of man I am.

Dry.

Unlike that beach.”

The kind of man who might whack you just because it’s Monday.”

Jeez, everybody was splitting themselves, but not because I’m such a witty guy, of course, I’m not dumb.

He stopped bawling, and looked up.

“Here it is, Carlo … what has four eyes, but can’t see?”

“But … but … today’s Tuesday, Al.”

He stopped laughing real quick at that one.

I looked at him.

“Four eyes … but … can’t see?

“It is?

Er, er, er, yes, er … oh yeah, I’ve got it, I’ve got it … four needles?”

“It’s Tuesday, boss.”

Well, you should have seen the smile on my face at that one.

“So it is. Sure it is.

“Eyes of a needle, needle eyes, oh yeah, I get you.

Well, better late than never, Freddo …” …

Not bad, not bad, Carlo.

But sometimes I would let them away with it.

But no cigar.

Hey, don’t raise your eyebrows like that.

You see, I said “What has”, not “What have”.

Sure I did.

Singular, you see.

You can’t be so cruel all the time.

Not plural.

No, it’s true.

So no, not four needles.”

Why, one day I have this asshole who’s been selling stuff on my patch without my say-so, at the office with all my guys around him, and he’s breaking my balls with all his yelling:

He was breathing real hard now, so I gave him the answer:

“I know you, Mr Capone, I know you’d whack me just because it’s Sunday, but I want to tell you …”

“Mississippi, Carlos, the great American State of Mississippi.

“Sunday?

Mississippi has four Is, but it can’t see nuttin’.

Sunday today?

Do you get it now?”

Say, Vito, what day is it today?” I asked.

He gasped a little.

“It’s Sunday today, boss.”

“Oh yes, yes, I get it”.

“So it is.

“Sure you get it, Carlo.

Sure it is.

Sure you do.

So how can you say that?

You get it right now …”

Me, whack someone on a Sunday?

Bang!

Me, of all people?

You see?

On Sunday, the day of the Lord, a day of rest?

I enjoy a joke.

Haven’t you read the Bible?

You gotta laugh or you’ll cry, right?

Didn’t you go to Sunday School?

But Carlo had to go because he had no what we call “rispetto”.

Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work.

Sometimes the offences are worse, though.

And for me, whacking constitutes work.

Everyone knows that snitches are the lowest of the low.

I won’t whack you just because it’s Sunday.

One day they brought in this punk to me who’d been talking to the Feds.

I would never whack anyone just because it’s Sunday.

Lefty, his name was.

Goes against the law of God.

He’d done a few runs for us now and again:

Hey, Luigi, get over here.

“Please, Al, there was nothing I could do.

This is Luigi.

They said they’d tell you I’d talked to them anyway.

Meet Luigi.

They said I’d go to jail, my wife would lose her job, and my daughter might have a nasty accident on her way home from school.

Luigi’s an atheist, and he don’t give two hoots about the law of God.

I had no choice, please.”

Luigi, now Luigi here, he might whack you just because it’s Sunday … Luigi?”

I put my hand on his arm.

You always got to adapt real quick to circumstances.

“Lefty, kid, I know that.

I’ve been adapting to circumstances real quick my whole life.

You were between a rock and a hard place, right?”

We had this bum who someone heard calling me a fat greasy wop dickhead.

He nodded real fast up and down.

When I arrived, the guys at the warehouse had gone that extra mile for the boss man.

“You think I’m gonna whack you for talking to the Feds?

All those insults, you know.

For snitching?

They had given Frankie a good going-over, and then they’d put him upside down, with his legs spread-eagled by ropes up to the ceiling, and his arms spread-eagled too by ropes to the walls, and his head just inches off the cement floor.

Hey, Lefty.

“You disrespectful toad, Frankie.

What do you take me for, son?

You’re worthless.

I wouldn’t whack you for snitching.

I might whack you just because it’s Tuesday.”

No, no. Not me.

Vito spoke up.

Me, I might whack you just because it’s Monday.

“It’s Monday today, boss.”

Say, Vito, what day is it today?”

“Monday?

“It’s Monday, boss.”

Monday today?

“So it is. Sure it is.” …

So it is.

Sometimes I get confused, though - the week after that I’m sitting back at the same warehouse with another guy, but this guy had done something only slightly down from snitching.

Hey, you stay here, Frankie, OK?

He’d been creaming off some of the takings, and that’s stealing from me.

Don’t go anywhere.

Boy, was Freddo shivering.

Don’t you move a muscle.

This was the Windy City all right, but he wasn’t trembling from the cold, and he was pleading for his life like all the others.

Carry on, boys.

My own family, too, my own brother’s boy.

I’ll be back tomorrow.” …

That’s what really hurt me:

Like I said before, you have to deal with all kinds of nationalities.

“I didn’t do it, I swear, Uncle Al.

One day we heard a German outfit was setting up in the South End, and wanted to reach out to us, asking about distributing our dope.

On my mother’s grave, I swear I didn’t.

I decided it was better to talk to the boss man, rather than organizing a totally unnecessary blood

Don’t kill me, Al, please.”

Blood baths are bad for business, see.

I was so annoyed with my nephew because he was holding out on me, even now.

“Listen up, boys, and listen good,” I told my men just before he arrived.

I grabbed his lapels, and I kissed him real hard on the forehead.

“We don’t wanna upset this Kraut, so nobody mention the First World War, OK?”

“I know you did it, Freddo, I know it was you!

“Boss?” young Gino piped up.

You broke my heart, Freddo, you broke my heart!”

“First World War?

I screamed at him.

There ain’t been no Second World War, boss.”

Yeah, I know it sounds weird.

Again, I had to smile.

It’s one of those touchy-feely Italian things.

“Gino, Gino, Gino, Gino.”

You gotta admit it’s dramatic, though.

Yes, I said his name four times, I pulled his lapels together, flicked a coupla specks of dust off his suit, and squeezed his cheek gently, you know the way we Italians do.

Wouldn’t surprise me if some director schmuck used that line in a movie some day.

Then I opened up my hands together, palms up, like I was reading a prayer book or something.

“Why, Freddo, why?” I went on.

We do that kind of thing too:

“You know the kind of man I am.

“Not yet there ain’t been no second war, Gino.

The kind of man who might whack you just because it’s Monday.”

Not yet.

He stopped bawling, and looked up.

You have no faith in politicians, kid.

“But … but … today’s Tuesday, Al.”

They might take some time to come up with a problem to get around a solution, but they’ll manage it in the end, believe me.

I looked at him.

So, nobody mention the war, first, second, third, or whatever.

“It is?

Keep your mouths shut, OK?”

“It’s Tuesday, boss.”

He was a well-dressed guy, I’ll say that for him.

“So it is. Sure it is.

Stiff, too, but extra polite.

Well, better late than never, Freddo …” …

Real Prussian, you know.

But sometimes I would let them away with it.

Even clicked his heels when he met us and shook my hand.

Hey, don’t raise your eyebrows like that.

But I sure didn’t want to miss anything if he said it in Kraut, so I had told Johnny to stay close behind me and translate anything he might let slip.

Sure I did.

Johnny’s mom was German, so he spoke the lingo real good.

You can’t be so cruel all the time.

“Hallo, my name is Fritz Müller, leader of zee Wurst Gang, and vee a new system for dope distribution haff.”

No, it’s true.

Say, what is it with these people?

Why, one day I have this asshole who’s been selling stuff on my patch without my say-so, at the office with all my guys around him, and he’s breaking my balls with all his yelling:

The guy comes over here, and he can’t even be bothered to learn the language.

“I know you, Mr Capone, I know you’d whack me just because it’s Sunday, but I want to tell you …”

Why don’t he speak it proper like what we does?

“Sunday?

“The Wurst Gang?

Sunday today?

Mister, you need some PR for your gang’s name.

Say, Vito, what day is it today?” I asked.

Especially if you’re going to be teaming up with the Best Gang.”

“It’s Sunday today, boss.”

All my guys laughed.

“So it is.

You know the drill.

Sure it is.

Fritz wasn’t laughing, though:

“No, Wurst.

So how can you say that?

Me, whack someone on a Sunday?

Wurst ees German sausage.

Me, of all people?

And zee name of zees sausage ist Erbswurst.

On Sunday, the day of the Lord, a day of rest?

Pea soup, but in sausage.

Roll.”

Haven’t you read the Bible?

“Sausage roll?

Didn’t you go to Sunday School?

Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work.

With pea soup?

What the hell?”

And for me, whacking constitutes work.

“Nein, nein. A roll as sausage, and peas in soup.

I won’t whack you just because it’s Sunday.

For us zee drugs to hide.

I would never whack anyone just because it’s Sunday.

Anyone can valk along zee street vith drugs in zee sausage, and zee polizei nozzing suspect.

Goes against the law of God.

Hey, Luigi, get over here.

In Germany everyone pea sausage uses.

This is Luigi.

Zey valk vith sausage under zer arms.

Meet Luigi.

Especially zee children.

Luigi’s an atheist, and he don’t give two hoots about the law of God.

Yes, children all zer childhood in Germany valk vith sausage, to school and back.

Luigi, now Luigi here, he might whack you just because it’s Sunday … Luigi?”

Ja, vee can use die Kinder too, as mules.

Police never bozzer vith zee kids.”

You always got to adapt real quick to circumstances.

“So, what you’re telling me is that you want to hide our drugs in sausage rolls and pea soup, and even have kids doing this for us?

I’ve been adapting to circumstances real quick my whole life.

We had this bum who someone heard calling me a fat greasy wop dickhead.

That’s not just crazy, it’s immoral.

How can you hide things in sausage rolls and pea soup?

When I arrived, the guys at the warehouse had gone that extra mile for the boss man.

And you can’t use kids, for crying out loud.

All those insults, you know.

What kind of an outfit are you running anyway?”

They had given Frankie a good going-over, and then they’d put him upside down, with his legs spread-eagled by ropes up to the ceiling, and his arms spread-eagled too by ropes to the walls, and his head just inches off the cement floor.

Fritz wasn’t happy. He kinda glared at me, and said:

“You disrespectful toad, Frankie.

“Arschloch. Ich könnt’ dich plattmachen, nur weil heute Mittwoch ist.”

You’re worthless.

Johnny whispered in my ear from behind.

I might whack you just because it’s Tuesday.”

His voice was trembling a bit, because what he had had to tell me you should never say to a Don.

Vito spoke up.

Let’s just say the last four words he translated in that whisper to me were “… just because it’s Wednesday.”

“It’s Monday today, boss.”

I turned to Johnny.

“Monday?

He was looking down at the floor.

Monday today?

I put my hands on his shoulders and I patted both cheeks a coupla times, and then patted him on the shoulder, the way we Italians do.

So it is.

“It’s OK, Johnny, you did good.

Hey, you stay here, Frankie, OK?

You was just doing your job, is all.

Don’t go anywhere.

Don’t worry.

Good boy.”

Don’t you move a muscle.

I turned around, took a deep breath and smiled at Fritz:

Carry on, boys.

“Well, well, maybe I was wrong about you, Herr Müller.

I’ll be back tomorrow.” …

We seem to be like-minded folk in the end.

Like I said before, you have to deal with all kinds of nationalities.

Yes, we sure think the same way.

One day we heard a German outfit was setting up in the South End, and wanted to reach out to us, asking about distributing our dope.

“It’s Wednesday, boss.”

I decided it was better to talk to the boss man, rather than organizing a totally unnecessary blood

Hey, Fritz, I’m sorry my German’s not too hot.

Blood baths are bad for business, see.

I only know a few words.

“Listen up, boys, and listen good,” I told my men just before he arrived.

I would say auf Wiedersehen, but I’m afraid auf Wiedersehen’s not going to happen …”

“We don’t wanna upset this Kraut, so nobody mention the First World War, OK?”

Yep, those were the days.

“Boss?” young Gino piped up.

A few whacks a day keep the wise guys away, that was my motto.

“First World War?

But that was a long, long time ago, you move forward a few years, and there I was, waiting for the judge to pass sentence.

There ain’t been no Second World War, boss.”

I noticed he was humming a little tune as he got ready.

Again, I had to smile.

Hey, I knew that tune from somewhere.

“Gino, Gino, Gino, Gino.”

Yes, I sure did.

Yes, I said his name four times, I pulled his lapels together, flicked a coupla specks of dust off his suit, and squeezed his cheek gently, you know the way we Italians do.

It was a number by that Mexican broad María Grever, wasn’t it?

Then I opened up my hands together, palms up, like I was reading a prayer book or something.

Couldn’t remember the name of the song, though. What was it called?

We do that kind of thing too:

“The defendant will rise”, rasped the judge.

“Not yet there ain’t been no second war, Gino.

Me, I just sat there smirking, until the big cop beside me whispered in my ear:

Not yet.

“Stand that big frigging flabby ass of yours up for the man, you dirty, verminous sonofabitch, or when we get downstairs again I’ll shove my hand right up it so far I can rip out your stinking black heart.”

You have no faith in politicians, kid.

Kind of like an offer I couldn’t refuse, as we say in the trade.

They might take some time to come up with a problem to get around a solution, but they’ll manage it in the end, believe me.

I stood up:

So, nobody mention the war, first, second, third, or whatever.

“It is my solemn duty to send you to prison for a term of 11 years, Mr Capone.

Keep your mouths shut, OK?”

Do you have anything to say?”

He was a well-dressed guy, I’ll say that for him.

“Sure I do,” I laughed in his face.

Stiff, too, but extra polite.

“You’re going to send me to prison for 11 years just for tax evasion?

Real Prussian, you know.

After all the guys I’ve iced?

Even clicked his heels when he met us and shook my hand.

Can’t you think up nuttin’ else?

But I sure didn’t want to miss anything if he said it in Kraut, so I had told Johnny to stay close behind me and translate anything he might let slip.

I got my reputation to think about, Mr Judge, your Honorship, Sir.”

Johnny’s mom was German, so he spoke the lingo real good.

“Oh no, Mr Capone,” he said, smiling nastily.

“Hallo, my name is Fritz Müller, leader of zee Wurst Gang, and vee a new system for dope distribution haff.”

I’m not sending you to prison for all your vile murderous activities.

Say, what is it with these people?

And funnily enough, I’m not sending you to prison for tax evasion either.

The guy comes over here, and he can’t even be bothered to learn the language.

You see, Mr Capone, I’m the kind of judge who might send you to prison just because it’s Friday.

Why don’t he speak it proper like what we does?

Say, bailiff, what day is it today?”

“The Wurst Gang?

“It’s Friday, your Honor.”

Mister, you need some PR for your gang’s name.

He smiled again.

Especially if you’re going to be teaming up with the Best Gang.”

Sure it is.” …

All my guys laughed.

went that judge’s gavel.

You know the drill.

And bang went my life on the outside, too.

Fritz wasn’t laughing, though:

“Take this obnoxious piece of horse manure down, officer, out of my sight and off to Atlanta,” he added as he got up to leave.

“No, Wurst.

He wasn’t just humming that song now, he was singing it quietly to himself.

Wurst ees German sausage.

Oh,

And zee name of zees sausage ist Erbswurst.

Then I got it.

Pea soup, but in sausage.

I remembered what the Grever woman’s song was called:

Roll.”

“What a diff’rence a day made”.

“Sausage roll?

Acknowledgements (in chronological order in the text, and by coincidence also in alphabetical order):

With pea soup?

Chris S – the seaweed / sea weed joke.

What the hell?”

Matthias Brombach for the German translation of “I might whack you just because it’s Wednesday”.

“Nein, nein. A roll as sausage, and peas in soup.

Bravo, Mervs

For us zee drugs to hide.

No wonder you were struggling to find time for the blaaaargh.

Anyone can valk along zee street vith drugs in zee sausage, and zee polizei nozzing suspect.

And now I’m running late frying up donuts for the trick-or-treaters.

In Germany everyone pea sausage uses.

Merveilleux Mervyn

Zey valk vith sausage under zer arms.

If that ain't genius, I don't know what it is.

Especially zee children.

Pasta

Yes, children all zer childhood in Germany valk vith sausage, to school and back.

Thanks a lot, Chris and P.L.F.!

Ja, vee can use die Kinder too, as mules.

Much appreciated.

Police never bozzer vith zee kids.”

Indeed, I had been under a lot of work pressure meanwhile, and just had to let it all go until the weekend.

“So, what you’re telling me is that you want to hide our drugs in sausage rolls and pea soup, and even have kids doing this for us?

By sheer coincidence (or was it, I wonder?

That’s not just crazy, it’s immoral.

…), my tomato sauce with De Cecco spaghetti was on the menu today.

How can you hide things in sausage rolls and pea soup?

I was, as always, under strict instructions for the sauce.

And you can’t use kids, for crying out loud.

Today I decided to heed them, though.

What kind of an outfit are you running anyway?”

If my lovely Basques want it like that, then I’ll do it, I thought.

Fritz wasn’t happy. He kinda glared at me, and said:

Sure I will.

“Arschloch. Ich könnt’ dich plattmachen, nur weil heute Mittwoch ist.”

I might do it just because it’s Sa...

Johnny whispered in my ear from behind.

Like we say here: "You broke all the dishes"

His voice was trembling a bit, because what he had had to tell me you should never say to a Don.

meaning you are amazing and you can exceed our expectations.

Let’s just say the last four words he translated in that whisper to me were “… just because it’s Wednesday.”

¡Bravo!

I turned to Johnny.

https://www.psypost.org/2019/11/unpublished-data-from-stanley-milgrams-experiments-casts-doubts-on-his-claims-about-obedience-54921

He was looking down at the floor.

Unpublished data from Stanley Milgram’s experiments cast doubt on his claims about obedience

I put my hands on his shoulders and I patted both cheeks a coupla times, and then patted him on the shoulder, the way we Italians do.

https://www.psypost.org/author/edolan

“It’s OK, Johnny, you did good.

Posts by Eric W. Dolan

You was just doing your job, is all.

BY ERIC W. DOLAN

NOVEMBER 17, 2019

Don’t worry.

Good boy.”

https://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.psypost.org%2F2019%2F11%2Funpublished-data-from-stanley-milgrams-experiments-casts-doubts-on-his-claims-about-obedience-54921

I turned around, took a deep breath and smiled at Fritz:

Share on Facebook

“Well, well, maybe I was wrong about you, Herr Müller.

https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.psypost.org%2F2019%2F11%2Funpublished-data-from-stanley-milgrams-experiments-casts-doubts-on-his-claims-about-obedience-54921&text=Unpublished%20data%20from%20Stanley%20Milgram%27s%20experiments%20cast%20doubt%20on%20his%20claims%20about%20obedience

We seem to be like-minded folk in the end.

Share on Twitter

Yes, we sure think the same way.

https://www.psypost.org/2019/11/unpublished-data-from-stanley-milgrams-experiments-casts-doubts-on-his-claims-about-obedience-54921#

“It’s Wednesday, boss.”

 Share on Facebook Share on Twitter

Hey, Fritz, I’m sorry my German’s not too hot.

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/rdrKCilEhC0" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

I only know a few words.

SHARE

I would say auf Wiedersehen, but I’m afraid auf Wiedersehen’s not going to happen …”

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Yep, those were the days.

Pinterest

A few whacks a day keep the wise guys away, that was my motto.

But that was a long, long time ago, you move forward a few years, and there I was, waiting for the judge to pass sentence.

LinkedIn

I noticed he was humming a little tune as he got ready.

Email

Hey, I knew that tune from somewhere.

An analysis of previously unpublished data raises serious questions about Stanley Milgram’s landmark obedience experiments.

Yes, I sure did.

It was a number by that Mexican broad María Grever, wasn’t it?

The findings, which have been published in Social Psychology Quarterly, indicate that many people were willing to engage in seemingly reprehensible behavior because they saw through the researchers’ cover story.

Those who believed the cover story, on the other hand, tended to be more defiant.

Couldn’t remember the name of the song, though.

What was it called?

The Milgram experiment was designed to test people’s willingness to bow to authority — in this case, scientists in lab coats.

Subjects were led to believe that they were participating in a study about learning, and were asked to deliver increasingly powerful electric shocks to another subject whenever he got an answer wrong during a memory test.

“The defendant will rise”, rasped the judge.

No shocks were actually delivered, but the other subject (who was actually a research assistant) made increasingly desperate cries of agony and pleas to stop.

Me, I just sat there smirking, until the big cop beside me whispered in my ear:

“Stand that big frigging flabby ass of yours up for the man, you dirty, verminous sonofabitch, or when we get downstairs again I’ll shove my hand right up it so far I can rip out your stinking black heart.”

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“I was surprised to discover an unpublished analysis in Stanley Milgram’s archives of the relationship between the amount of shock subjects gave in the experiment and their belief that the learner was really being hurt when I was researching my book

‘Behind the Shock Machine:

the untold story of the notorious Milgram psychology experiments,'” explained study author Gina Perry, a science historian and an associate in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne.

I stood up:

“I also came across feedback in the archives from Milgram’s subjects that detailed what kinds of things made them suspicious that the experiment was a hoax and their hunch that the learner was not really being hurt.”

“It is my solemn duty to send you to prison for a term of 11 years, Mr Capone.

“I summarised the findings of the unpublished analysis in my book but my co-authors of this paper and I thought that we would look at the data in more detail and re-analyse it using more sophisticated statistical techniques to establish how subjects’ belief in or suspicions about the experiment affected their behavior,” Perry said.

Do you have anything to say?”

“So if someone was suspicious that the experiment was a hoax how did they react when it came to ‘shocking’ the learner?

“Sure I do,” I laughed in his face.

And how did those subjects who really believed the man was receiving painful shocks respond when they were told to continue to administer what they thought were painful shocks?”

“You’re going to send me to prison for 11 years just for tax evasion?

The researchers examined data from 656 post-experiment questionnaires, which asked the subjects to report how much they believed the learner was receiving painful shocks.

After all the guys I’ve iced?

Most of the subjects (56 percent) were defiant and at some point refused to continue administering the electric shocks.

These subjects were also more likely to have believed that the learner was suffering.

Those who were less successfully convinced that the learner was in pain, however, were more obedient.

Can’t you think up nuttin’ else?

“Milgram publicly dismissed any suggestion that his subjects might have seen through the experimental deception and his work stresses his success in convincing his volunteers that the experiment was ‘real’ even though his unpublished research showed that this was not the case,” Perry told PsyPost.

I got my reputation to think about, Mr Judge, your Honorship, Sir.”

“While Milgram reported on the amount of shock that subjects were prepared to administer he suppressed data that gives us insights into why people behaved the way they did.

Our study shows that the believability of the experimental scenario was highly variable, contrary to Milgram’s claims and that it affected subjects’ behavior.

Some subjects were convinced the learner was receiving painful shocks, others were sceptical and suspicious.”

“Oh no, Mr Capone,” he said, smiling nastily.

“Our analysis shows that people who believed the learner was in pain were two and a half more times likely to defy the experimenter and refuse to give further shocks.

We found that contrary to Milgram’s claims, the majority of subjects in the obedience experiments were defiant, and a significant reason for their refusal to continue was to spare the man pain,” Perry said.

I’m not sending you to prison for all your vile murderous activities.

“This upends the traditional narrative about the obedience experiments as a demonstration of our slavish obedience to the orders of authorities and as an explanation for events such as the Holocaust.

Our results shift the focus to the issue of defiance of authority, and empathy and altruism as the dominant reactions of subjects who volunteered for this research.”

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https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/bjso.12206

You see, Mr Capone, I’m the kind of judge who might send you to prison just because it’s Friday.

The new research builds upon findings from a previous study, which analyzed recordings of 91 conversations conducted immediately after the termination of the experiments.

The recordings showed that most of the obedient subjects justified continuing the experiment because they believed the learner was not really being harmed.

Say, bailiff, what day is it today?”

“The key findings of our study, that obedience to authority is not as unreasoning and automatic as Milgram would have us believe, but was based on commonsense judgements by subjects who were variously convinced and unconvinced by the experimental scenario and responded accordingly, should prompt textbook writers to significantly revise their presentations of the research,” Perry said.

“It’s Friday, your Honor.”

The study, “Credibility and Incredulity in Milgram’s Obedience Experiments:

A Reanalysis of an Unpublished Test“, was authored by Gina Perry, Augustine Brannigan, Richard A. Wanner, and Henderikus Stam.

He smiled again.

Sure it is.” …

went that judge’s gavel.

And bang went my life on the outside, too.

“Take this obnoxious piece of horse manure down, officer, out of my sight and off to Atlanta,” he added as he got up to leave.

He wasn’t just humming that song now, he was singing it quietly to himself.

Oh,

Then I got it.

I remembered what the Grever woman’s song was called:

“What a diff’rence a day made”.

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