



ITALIA

# QUARANTEENS

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They're aged between 15 and 20, carefree and used to doing, more or less, as they pleased. In their final year of high school or beginning university in their home cities, in Europe or the United States, they had dreams, hobbies and social lives. However, on 10 March the lockdown was introduced and they were taken aback by how drastic it was to be: schools closed, extra-curricular activities and gatherings were forbidden. Nothing until that moment had been so imperative or sudden. They accepted it without rancour, not because they feared for their own health, but for the health of their parents and their elderly relatives. They moved their education, sports, hobbies and social lives online. They found creativity and refuge in Houseparty and fitness apps. They adapted, not without difficulty, to a new and less predictable reality.

We asked them what changed in their lives and what will change in the world they know. And they answered with a touch of rhetoric but with great candour about what they heard from the adults, also with a certain respect and loyalty: "we were moving too fast, there'll be less pollution, we'll wear masks and greet each other with our elbows. But so what?" Everything has changed and there is a new normal now. It's a process in which they now feel that they have an integral part, but without prejudice. They are the peers of Greta Thunberg; they follow the Climate Change movement with an increased awareness, but without yet knowing where it will lead exactly. The first part of 2020 has not been wasted. Everyone has gained something from it – be that family life, independent study or more time for thinking and doing.



Lodovico, 20  
Lodovico is a student at Cambridge University, where until March he was attending his lectures as usual, until Boris Johnson was admitted to hospital and the seriousness of Covid-19 was finally acknowledged in the UK. Cambridge, like every university closed its doors indefinitely. Lodovico returned to Milan and spent the lockdown at his brother's house. His parents were far away and he had a girlfriend to win back, and he did so by learning to play the guitar to sing her the love songs of Italian singer De Andrè. He wrote a thesis to conclude this strange year in which there were neither video lectures nor exams. The future? It would take hours and hours to answer that question.



Mara, 19 and Giulia, 15

Mara is in her final year of scientific high school and Giulia is in her first year of Classical high school. Their home life can be described as bohemian, with an emphasis on respecting the environment and personal responsibility. A car-free family, everyone gets around by bicycle and for years all the family (children included) have been happy to keep their consumption to a minimum (even though sometimes this can be difficult). At home the priorities are culture, music, good food and respect for the world we live in. Mara plays the violin, sews clothes and makes things for the home with the sewing machine she was given for her 18th birthday. She hasn't missed a single day of lessons and was the last to complete her final-year exams. After everything that has happened she's exhausted. Her only regret? Not having experienced this final year of school with her friends "it's been a bit alienating, but that's ok."



### Skinny, 17

Still a minor, Skinny left school to focus on becoming a musician. His first four songs brought him recognition as an emerging talent of Italian street music. He performs trap music, which is not to everyone's taste, and tells the stories of life on the outskirts of his city, Catania, where he lives without any adults to answer to. On the street you do what you want and what you can. The fact that his songs have been listened to 3 and a half million times has convinced him that he's on the right track. Before the lockdown he had been headed to Milan to try and break into the Lombardy trap scene. Instead he was stuck with his producer and a few friends in a house in Giarre where he wrote music and shot a new video for his song Blue Bandana. During the lockdown his music took off on YouTube, Spotify and Applemusic. The future is Milan, performing and writing. His dream is to help his mother. Pollution, the pace of modern life, consumerism and waste weren't and aren't urgent issues for him. For Skinny what's urgent is the here and now.



Marco, 20

Marco is in his first year of a degree in Cultural Heritage Management, having chosen the faculty because his family owns a cinema that he would like to take over one day. He spent the lockdown with his mum, who is separated, and his brother. His sister is an architect in Africa. He spent a lot of his time on the large balcony of his home that overlooks the condominium gardens: this was his contact with nature and the outside world in this period, along with taking his dog out for walks. He did his exams and now he's dreaming of going on a road trip in Italy with his friends.



Margherita, 19

She feels she made a mistake in choosing her university degree course, and all those hours listening to a professor droning on really bored her. She was used to whizzing around non-stop visiting friends on her moped. The lockdown put a stop to that lifestyle and she became much calmer. She was at home all of the time. She ended up no longer even wanting to go out at all. After the initial frenzy of working out on a gym mat with an app, and the evenings playing card games on Houseparty, she took up reading: 18 books in two months. She decided to switch faculty to study sociology. She has also decided to move city, maybe to Trento or Padua. She wants to change everything. "I'm not looking for a better world, at least that's not how I would express it". She isn't afraid of pollution, the pace of modern life or politics. But finally she's had a moment to learn what these things are and what she can do about them in her own small way. Volunteering, studying, ethical behaviour are set to feature as she moves forward.



Andrea, 19

In his final year of high school, Andrea attended online lessons and studied for his final exams, with the advantage of doing so in a two-bedroom flat in Porta Romana with two friends, Diego and Giulio, with whom he has created @produzionisenzapretese, a fledgling agency to support Milanese events. Andrea is the group's photographer. For him the world of fashion that they worked for is changing and the lockdown has streamlined the industry substantially: fashion shows, for example, will be less frequent, speeding up the development of digital graphics that are set to replace live photography with animation and 3D graphics. This is just one example, but many sectors will feel the effects of the pandemic with positive changes, including the impact on the climate "the air in Milan has never been so breathable".



Lucrezia, 14

For Lucrezia the beginning of the lockdown was very hard, mainly because she couldn't see or meet up with her friends. However, this situation enabled her to meet new people online, who she later got to know in person. This phase led her to reflect on taking things for granted and appreciating the little things that normally we pay little attention to. She is particularly worried for the future because she doesn't know how long it will take before we return to normality, when she will finally be able to embrace her friends and get back to her day-to-day life. At school she has attended online lessons, but she really misses being at school in-person, meeting with her teachers and classmates.



Matteo, 19

Matteo is a musician and an intelligent 19-year-old. Very intelligent, very musical and very much a nineteen-year-old. He carried on with everything he had to, and he did so without complaining about not being around his friends. Now they're all spending time outside but he knows that he'll soon have to shut himself in a rehearsal room. Next year he'll be studying engineering and attending the civic school of jazz. Not in a better world, but in a world where everything will have to be reconsidered, recalculating everything from the distance between people to the way we live. And this won't be a simple undertaking.



Valentina, 19 and Lanka, 19

At home with mum, dad, sister and, as of just a few days before the lockdown, a beautiful wolf dog puppy. Her boyfriend and classmate, with whom she attended school every morning and studied at home every afternoon, she saw on Skype with the same frequency as before: studying together, chatting, playing online. All in all, two months flew by. Then more studying, the final school exams, and now, finally, they have gone back to spending all day together in person. Plans for the future: spending a bit more time with her parents, "which, after all, is really great."



Giovanni, 17, and Leonardo, 19

During this period Giovanni really valued the time with his family and he discovered his passion for gardening and started to grow various plants on his balcony. The lockdown provided an opportunity to reflect on the problems linked to climate change and overpopulation. For Giovanni it would be better to live in harmony with nature's rhythms. Now he wants to continue with his gardening: he started out studying IT but next year he's going to switch to agriculture. His brother Leonardo has noted that the confinement brought people closer together and created more solidarity between people and thinks that after every negative period there follows a kind of renaissance for society. He is involved personally in issues concerning climate change and thinks that after the pandemic people will pay more attention to it.



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Irene, 16

Irene attends an English school and does synchronised swimming at competitive level. She was never really worried about getting the virus herself, however, when the lockdown began to drag on, she feared that it would never end. There were some positive aspects: in Milan, for example, she noted a greater solidarity between people, and she particularly noticed the lower levels of pollution during the shutdown. Consequently she began to ask herself what she could actually do to ensure that everything just didn't go back to how it was before. The pandemic led her to understand that we humans are the problem when it comes to pollution. The lockdown also meant she had to interrupt her sports training and thus made her reflect on whether it was worth continuing, with all the sacrifices involved in training for hours each week.



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Diego, 21

Diego is from Modena and enrolled at the Milan Polytechnic University, he couldn't wait to return to Milan after 3 June – the eagerly anticipated date set for reopening travel to and from the Lombardy region. Passionate about Big Data, he constantly kept up to date on the latest figures relating to the virus. "I don't want to be a conspiracy theorist," he says, "but I believe that some measures and regulations introduced to protect society, essential workers, like the use of face masks, but also online schooling, have had a substantial impact that will leave a lasting impression. I don't want these to become radical, in an Orwellian way. Keeping health, the economy and society in equilibrium is difficult and I don't believe it will happen. I'm not going to make a prediction, but there will be consequences. Among my family and friends we went back to what we did about five years ago, downloading Minecraft, a computer game to rebuild the world: we even had a barbecue on Easter Monday."



Leila, 20

With three dogs Leila didn't lack opportunities to leave the house. Once outside, she longed to bump into a neighbour just to share a few words. It was by doing this that she discovered a voluntary service to bring shopping to those who were unable to leave their homes or pay for necessities. As well as using Meet to continue her studies online, she dedicated her spare time to something that she felt was more urgent. And she discovered how she could make a difference in her own small way. And she intends to carry on doing so in the future.



Giulio, 20 Andrea 19, and Diego 21

Giulio is in his first year of higher education, at film school. He chose this path because "I wanted to do something practical." As it happens, he has found himself studying hours and hours of theory online. "Gatto" (Giulio's surname) sometimes feels like a caged animal. He really wants to go out but behind his house are just endless fields of crops, and he can't. His father asked "But who do you want to meet? There's no one out there. Just the police waiting to give you a 400-euro fine. Have you got that money?" On 4 May his despair came to an end. He put a few things in a backpack, jumped on his bicycle and pedalled all the way to Milan to spend some time with his friends Diego (photo 16) and Andrea (photo 8). The three friends had launched a small company to offer photographic, music and video services during the Milan fashion shows. Obviously everything has been cancelled. Giulio can't wait to get back to his life. On his own behaviour, he thinks that it's obvious that we need to respect the world we live in, and he plans to do that and stay loyal to his principles. Even though he hates facemasks, he wears them without complaining too much, but fears that his lifestyle might have to change.



Davide, 20

Davide was in New York when the lockdown was introduced in Italy. Then the same thing happened there and he flew to Los Angeles, where his American family has a holiday home. Then the virus reached the West Coast and he was stuck home alone without a car and with a motorway as his only way out. His main challenges were shopping, solitude, and the distance from his real home in Milan. Music was his salvation and he wrote songs and sang. After a number of cancellations, finally he managed to return home.



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