

Accessibility Horror Story

Personal information

- **Name:** Joan
- **City and country:** Barcelona, Spain
- **Social media handles:** @joan_pahisa (Twitter, Instagram), @joanp (TabiFolk)
- **Your accessibility needs or how are you related to accessibility:** Little person and crutch user.

Your horror story

It was 2014. At the time I used a crutch, instead of a wheelchair. It was late at night, past 2am, and I had taken the last train to go back home. The train stopped at Vallldoreix, an outdoor station at a residential area 20 minutes away from Barcelona. I got off and made for the elevator to change platforms, as I had parked my car at the other side of the station. The elevator was out of order. Apparently, it only worked until 10pm. I guess it was unthinkable that disabled, elderly or people with baby carts roamed outside after 10. Curfew for everyone.

Anyway, reluctantly, I made for the stairs and one step at a time, little by little, I reached the underground corridor. I crossed it at my own pace. It was winter and my joints needed their time to move about. I reached the other end and, when I was starting to climb the stairs on the other side, I heard a loud metallic noise: “rack”, “rack”. I’d been locked up inside the station. Apparently, there was an automatic shutdown. Later, I learned that if cameras didn’t detect any movement, about 3 minutes after the last train, all shutters would go down. As I’m a little person, while being at the base of the stairs, cameras happily pointed above my head, so neither human nor AI saw me.

The thing is, when I got to the top of the stairs, I realized that all shutters were down and, thus, all exits were blocked. I didn’t panic. I’m quite used to surreal situations. And you’ll say, well you just made a phone call to the police or emergency services. But, you know, I didn’t feel quite like saying: “hey, I’ve been locked up at the station...”. Who knows how many explanations would I’ve had to give and, also, who knows how long it’d have took them to come and get me out. It was cold, I was tired and the only thing I wanted was to get home and sleep. So, I started checking which was the smallest fence that I could try to jump.

The smallest fence was more than 2 meters. It’s as if someone with average height finds a 4 or 5 meter fence. I thought, “ok”, probably because of my brain being half numb due to sleepiness and cold. Anyway, I was in front of the fence, but I couldn’t jump it with a crutch. No problem, I took the crutch and threw it over to the other side. Climbing with

the belt pouch was kind of complicated too, as it restricted my movement. So, I took the cellphone, just in case, put it on my pocket and threw the pouch. Luckily, there didn't seem to be any thieves around. I was also wearing shoes, crap, I do usually wear shoes, but they wouldn't allow me to pass my feet between the bars and climb the fence as a ladder. No problem, I took them off and threw them to the other side.

Good. I was ready and I started to climb. When I was nearly on top, the fence started shaking, but it was already too late to turn around. I kept going and went over it clinging tight for my life. I made it and I went down. I put my shoes back on, I took the pouch and started walking with my crutch. A few minutes later, I was home. In bed, I wondered what would they think if they reviewed the security footage. But that's another story...