

Lockdown diaries: Love in the time of Corona can blossom too (anonymous)

In the week preceding the lockdown, Nancy* entered a clandestine relationship with her coworker Ira* and they embarked on a romantic getaway to a rural house in his home country and were there when the state of emergency was declared. With abundant wine and clean air in a serene location removed from society, they are exploring their feelings for each other away from the prying eyes of their colleagues.

Nancy is a 20-something-year-old who has been living in Madrid for two years. She pivoted away from teaching and became a copywriter at the international firm where she met Ira. Their fondness towards each other has escalated from covert cigarette breaks to safeguarding each other as the world crumbles around them.

*At the request of the subjects, their names have been changed.

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?

Before the lockdown, my life was pretty average. I had recently broken up with my ex boyfriend/*pareja de hecho* with whom I still technically share a flat in Madrid. I've started

getting involved romantically with my colleague Ira after months of playful banter and subtle glances.

Our team has been encouraging us to get together for a while now, but we've been wanting to take it slowly to avoid outside pressure. They make on-the-nose jokes about us as they've speculated that we've hooked up already. They're an intuitive and nosey bunch. I look forward to finally coming clean and telling them everything. We plan on sending flowers to my manager as she's the one who first introduced us when I joined the team.



Now, I'm quarantined in a serene rural location with Ira, which we fled to after mutually declaring our feelings for each other. Our respective living situations in Madrid are less than ideal as they're not shared with people we would want to endure a strict quarantine with. We made the split-second decision to flee Madrid to visit his parents at their rural house in his home country.

I wasn't imagining the lockdown would last this long, and I had assumed I could easily get back to Spain if needed, but now it seems like I'm here in this countryside paradise until Semana Santa at least.

Thankfully, everything is working out. The anxiety I experienced on the flight was insane, I am genuinely happy to be where I am. We have more space and fresh air than in Madrid and are in a place with few cases of the virus and with enough wine stockpiled for the apocalypse. There is little else to do outside of teleworking, siestas, and NSFW activities.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

Right now, I feel like my entire life is one romantic comedy a la "Love in a time of Corona." Since our coworkers remain in the dark, it's funny when they talk to us about each other while we're sitting next to each other.

We set up our teleworking stations in different rooms so that we could conference with our colleagues without blowing our cover, and it's always fun trying to playfully distract the other without anyone finding out.

How are you coping?



Wine. Lots of wine. Otherwise, talking to my friends back in Madrid and spending quality time with Ira and his parents, practicing their language, and helping out around the country house when I'm not clocked into work. I wouldn't call it "coping" though, as I am enjoying the beautiful countryside with someone whose companionship I savor.

What goals are you hoping to achieve as our time in lockdown continues?

Right now all of this feels surreal, but I'm beginning to get a workout routine, and hopefully, I'll learn more of his language.

Otherwise, I am so excited to see where this quarantine takes my new relationship. So far, it's been amazing and we're learning so much about each other that would have taken months to learn under regular circumstances. I don't doubt this will set the foundation for a relationship that is solid, full of trust, and long-lasting.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

See my best friend and go out for drinks and spill all of the tea about what can only be described as a 21st-century romcom. We will dabble in 4/20-friendly fun as these resources are beyond our reach at this time.

Any advice for people in a similar situation?

My biggest piece of advice is to communicate with those around you. Ira and I haven't had much time to set relationship boundaries and guidelines and now we're thrown into this situation together where we are learning as we go along. Thankfully we're both strong communicators so that isn't too difficult for us but it's unprecedented for both of us to go from 0 to 100 so quickly with a new partner.

Make sure to take some "you time." It's difficult to be outgoing and engaged every second. In the mornings I always take time for myself to get ready for the day, despite not actually needing to go to work or leave the house. I listen to

political podcasts that allow me to remain an informed and socially conscious citizen while being so far removed from society.

We're also lucky because his parents' property is set up with a separate building for their guests, so "adult time" isn't restricted and I can go and hide for a few hours if I become overwhelmed by a language I don't speak and people that I've only recently met in an environment that I am still adapting to.

Have you noticed any acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

Recently, at the grocery store, with lines out the door, I saw several people make way for seniors and the elderly to let them inside first. It was cold and raining, and to avoid crowds inside shoppers needed to queue outside and had to wait patiently to be granted access. It was a human moment witnessing people let those more vulnerable to the elements enter first.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Don't let economic factors drive your policy. The cost of human life is far more important. Keep the quarantine going for as long as necessary, because even one infected person can prolong the threat.

My hometown in the USA has no cases, but it's spreading in my home state. To everyone in my hometown, don't be stupid. Even if the mayor doesn't specifically call on people to isolate, do so. We've seen what can happen in a short period of time if people don't take this seriously, don't let your situation get as bad as it is in Europe.

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

If you'd like to get involved and share a compelling story from this ongoing chapter of history, reach out to Daphne Binioris (daphne@veracontent.com) and Daniel Catalan (a96039@aup.edu)