The Quarantine friend

Linda Dedkova

On a call to a friend in Czech Republic, she described him as being 30, dressing like 80 and eating like 12: he didn’t like olives, tomatoes, coffee. Her friend burst into laughter but then the Skype connection got lost.

The cute woman from Tinder didn’t call back after their social distant date at the riverbank. It was four weeks into lockdown and she had barely seen a human.

ing when she scheduled a co-working session with him in her tiny one-bedroom apartment. The doorbell rang at 9.59. A bottle of Fanta in one hand, a bag of extra-large chips in the other one, his body almost entirely filled the door frame. He stood there so excited. She moved away just in time to avoid the hug. “We should keep the distance”, she showed him to a sofa apologetically.

He offered to read her job application and gave her several helpful tips. After he found a meme on his phone: social media were circling sarcastic script ideas for social distant filmmaking. When she proposed they’d get some take-away pizza, he jumped up and followed her out of the door like a dog.

When they sit down to eat, the dreaded news arrived: Berlin senate had prolonged the lockdown for two more weeks. She looked over the edge of her pizza box. She could only see his jaw, loudly smacking and swallowing his Diabolo and lost her appetite.

She left her half-eaten Margarita behind and slipped silently under her sheets. In the reflection of her glasses, she saw his imposing body lying down next to her. When he placed his hand on her shoulder, It felt like a child touching their mother. Alarmingly disgusted, she pushed herself more to the edge of the bed. With his sausage-shaped fingers, he took her glasses and cleaned them with his shirt. He pressed them back on her face and smiled at her.

His palm was thick, salmoned-colored and suddenly felt good on her face. The sensations in her body read ambiguously. She clearly didn’t want to do this but her body was telling her something else: It was the first time in weeks she was with someone in a room that wasn`t a supermarket.

Their sex was quick and mechanical, but surprisingly relaxing. In the evening, they watched tv shows arm in arm, finishing the bag of chips.

She woke up feeling itchy all over her body. The blanket couldn’t protect her anymore. Fritz still slept like a puppy. She jumped up and swiftly put on her running shoes - jogging was one of the few permitted activities. Despite the few rounds in the morning sun, the anxiety didn`t drop. The metal music in her ears only intensified the itching and transported it deeper into her body.

Back at home, she found him sitting half-naked wrapped in her fluffiest towel. “I made you breakfast”, he smiled and his smile reminded her of her 12 year old brother.

 A lukewarm pancake landed on her plate. Her residue gluten free flour was all over the floor. How many supermarkets will she visit to find it again? How long will the queues be? She sat down but she couldn`t eat. She ran under the shower, her feet marking traces in the snow-like floor.

The shower must have been cold for a while: Her fingers turned blue, her upper lip shivered. She felt a mix of relief and sadness when she finally heard the front door closing. She carefully dried herself with the tiny hand towel that was left.