



**LOVE
UNDER
LOCKDOWN**

A SHORT STORY BY

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Love Under Lockdown

When Andrea Reid's virtual travel business disappears overnight as COVID-19 causes a lockdown, she is forced to find another means of income to support her 4-year-old son Ryan. Out comes the frying pan and she begins a social media page to showcase how to cook. Before long orders are rolling in but now her annoying neighbour David Canoe a programmer isn't pleased with the traffic her success is bringing to the community.

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Chapter 1

Andrea Reid did a quick calculation in her head as the cashier tallied her groceries. Stocking the house with a week's worth of food for a four-year-old with special dietary needs was a nightmare in Montserrat. She had enough money to cover bills for two more weeks but if the government announced a further lockdown she would be in trouble.

She had watched eighteen months of travel bookings disappear overnight. Having to tell her clients that the island was being closed to foreigners for the foreseeable future had been rough. Watching the bank reverse all the credit card payments had been worse.

She graciously thanked the cashier for her change and receipt then hurriedly packed her groceries into the reusable bags she kept on hand. Adjusting her face mask, she grabbed the bags, turned to go, and slammed into the back of the man who was awkwardly trying to maneuver with a shopping cart.

“Beg your pardon,” he said apologetically, turning to see who he had run into.

Andrea looked up into the light brown eyes of her neighbor. David Canoe was out in public in the daylight. She had been wondering if he was a vampire, as the only time she had ever seen movement at his house was after the streetlights came on.

His soft British lilt behind the black mask was a surprise. She had always wondered what he sounded like. He got the cart moving in the right direction and nodded in her direction, embarrassment visible on his light brown cheeks.

“No worries. Grab the ice cream and cookies first. You don't want to be stuck inside with no comfort food.” She smiled and kept it moving. No need to get all googly eyed over the man who intrigued her ever since he moved in next door three months before.

Andrea removed her mask and checked the time as she put her hatchback in gear. She needed to collect her son from the sitter before the curfew, but she had a few more stops to make.

How was she going to cover the bills next month? She had several ventures, but all were built around serving people in the travel sector. Talk about having all her eggs in one basket. The apartment she reserved for Air B&B guests would be empty for months to come, based on predictions from travel experts. All five of the clients who had asked for her personalized chef services for the coming three weeks had cancelled their trips to Montserrat. All the local restaurants and bars were being shut down so bartending was out of the question.

As she made her way through Brades, Andrea made a quick tally of what she could use to generate money in the short time. On impulse, she swung into a local hardware store, which also handled distribution of flour and other basic supplies. A few horns blared as she'd forgotten to use her indicator.

Replacing her mask, she got into the line to wait her turn to be able to enter.

She could make bread. Lots of it and sell it. She had a local audience on her Instagram. It was the perfect place to advertise the bread for sale. What about essential workers? she thought. They would need meals. It would be a great way to put her cooking skills to work. Granted she specialized in international cuisine but cooking local food was not beneath her or outside her experience. She had her grandmother Miss Ida to thank for that. God rest her soul.

By the time Andrea left the shop, she'd purchased two large bags of flour, two cases of tuna, big blocks of cheese, sugar, containers of butter, baking powder, yeast, onions, and condiments. She had ignored the stares of people wondering if she had gone mad or was preparing for Armageddon. Desperate times called for cooking, and she was ready.

Before losing her nerve, she took a photo of the bag of flour and posted that bread would be available the next morning.

Now to figure out how to get paid and serve the people without the police finding out.

The scent of fresh baked bread wafted through the window as the breeze stirred the curtain. David looked at the time and groaned. He had forty minutes to find the error in the code that was keeping his client's site from loading. He stood to stretch the kink out of his shoulders. Blinking lights through the window caught his attention.

“What in the world?”

There were four cars with the lights on dim lined up outside his neighbor's house.

Wasn't this illegal? The government had implemented a lockdown and house visits were a no go. He watched as someone flitted between the cars, handing out packages and the cars swiftly reversed and disappeared into the early morning light.

He recognized the woman he had ran into at the supermarket as she waved goodbye to the driver of the final car. She turned in his direction and he stepped back from the window. He wondered what she did for a living. He never saw her leave except to drop off or pick up a little boy he figured was her son. She never seemed to be away from the house in the day except for short periods and it did not look like she had much of a social life after dark. At least they had that in common. He did not go out much either. Maybe she was a coder like he was. He was about to say she did not look the type but stopped himself. While he fit the mold of a code nerd from his glasses right down to his loafers, most women he knew who coded could easily run for president or Miss Universe.

A knock on the door interrupted his musings.

He glanced at the time then went to the door. He peeked through the peephole but only saw a shadow moving away. Curious, he opened the door and found a package on the step.

A note was stapled to the top of the brown bag.

Best eaten with some guava jelly or cheese. Enjoy. Breads by Andrea.

Intrigued, he closed the door and walked into the tiny kitchen. He wasn't much of a cook, so he had not minded that the home he was renting did not have a large kitchen. Opening the bag, the scent of freshly baked bread warmed him right down to his feet. He counted eight rolls each a bit smaller than a hamburger bun. He broke off a piece and groaned, even as the buttery bread seemed to melt in his mouth.

He glanced at the time on the microwave and quickly made himself a sandwich. Cheese, he did have in abundance. He had passed on the guava jelly in the store and now he regretted it. He added slices of tomato, cucumber and lettuce and took a huge bite as he headed back to his computer.

Stepping away from the computer and the hearty sandwich seemed exactly what he needed because in a matter of minutes he found the coding error which had evaded him for the last fourteen hours. Fixing the code quickly, he tested that it worked several times. He switched on various VPNs to ensure that different areas of the world were able to access the website without glitches. A few more tweaks, and he made the site live.

David logged his work hours and his software spit out an invoice. Once he reviewed the figures, he scheduled it to email the client in Sweden the following morning. He always delayed bills for twenty-four hours in case other glitches developed.

It was now six thirty and after shutting down his system, he took a shower and went to bed.

Chapter 2

Andrea's glee at selling bread was short-lived. Who knew, the police were on Instagram? Once she had posted that all the bread on her first day was sold out, a cease-and-desist notice had turned up in her inbox. It was illegal to have people at her home who did not reside in her household. Now, she was stuck with a whole lot of flour and tuna.

The police officer had suggested she apply for a permit to be considered a caterer, offering baked goods to essential workers, but it would take a few days to be approved. She did not want to risk a fine. Money was a premium now.

"Mommy, can you help me please?" Ryan's voice coming from the bathroom jolted her into action.

"Coming baby. What's wrong?"

Ryan stood at the sink attempting to brush his teeth.

"I can't see in the mirror. Can you lift me up please?"

She smiled at his efforts to stand on tiptoe on the stool near the sink.

"Up you go."

She buried her face in his neck, which made him giggle even as he brushed his teeth.

"Stop mommy. I need to spit."

She flipped him horizontally which made him giggle and spurt out the toothpaste. Andrea helped him rinse his mouth and wiped his face before squeezing him tightly.

"What would you like to do today? We've got it all to ourselves."

"Don't I have to go by the sitter?" Ryan looked up at her as they got comfortable on the living room couch.

"Nope. The police say we must stay indoors. Let's see what's on TV. You get first pick."

“Oh yeah.” Ryan grabbed the remote and as she expected, headed straight for his favorite dinosaur cartoon.

Andrea cuddled her son and tried not to worry about money. It was hard. She had been counting on this move to Montserrat to get her life together. A global pandemic had not been anywhere on the horizon when she had put all her money into purchasing the three-bedroom house in Old Towne. She loved the residential community. The homes were spread out across gentle hills and valleys and the volcano was in the distance. The main town was less than thirty minutes away, but she rarely needed to go that far unless she was getting groceries or banking.

She searched for the notebook and pen she kept in the side table near the couch and began to scribble. First it was just about her frustration and her fears. Then she wrote a resolution to come up with a way to be proactive and not to worry about her lack of finances. Ryan’s giggle at the antics of the dinosaurs made her pause and smile. She reached over and kissed his cheek, and he snuggled closer.

Writing one last note about being thankful for her son and her life, she closed the book and dug in for a few hours of TV watching with her favorite male.

At noon, she turned off the television and invited Ryan to join her in the kitchen to make lunch. She loved to prepare meals with him. His endless questions were a great way to understand how his little mind worked.

The bell on her phone chimed, indicating she had an incoming video call. Ryan peeked at the screen and screamed.

“Mommy, it’s Aunty Vicky. Can I answer it?”

“Yes.”

“Hello Aunty Vicky. Guess what?” Ryan propped the phone against a bag of sugar. He bent so his chin was on the counter and he was eye level with the phone.

“Hi Sweetness. Let me see. You discovered a dinosaur under your bed?”

Ryan laughed. “Nope. Guess again.”

“You found out that Mars is made of purple candy.”

“Is it mommy?” He asked, lifting his head to see his mother’s face.

Andrea laughed. “Aunty is messing with you.”

“You’re out of guesses Aunty. I don’t have to go to school anymore. I get to stay home with mommy forever and ever.”

“What? Wow.” Andrea’s sister feigned shock and his pronouncement.

“It’s not forever and ever Ryan. Just for the next few weeks.”

“But that’s a long time too mommy.”

In Ryan’s mind, any time away from school was not long enough.

“So, what will you and mommy do with all that time?” The words were directed at Ryan, but she knew that her sister was concerned about what she would do now.

Vicky had not been pleased with her decision to move more than three thousand miles away on an island she had not seen since she was five.

“Well, we’re going to watch lots of TV and then we will cook.”

“We? I’m the one cooking when you said you were going to help me.” Andrea poked her son and went to wash her hands.

Ryan laughed. “Mommy is cooking. I’m going to eat.”

Her sister laughed. “Your mommy is a great cook so whatever she cooks will be yummy.”

“How about you set the table for me please? In fact, let’s eat outside on the back verandah today.” Andrea handed her son the plates.

“Yes mommy. Bye Aunty. Love you.” Ryan dashed off with the plates to the back door. The plates were made from bamboo so she was not worried that he would break them.

“Love you baby.” Her sister said.

“How’s it going up there?” Andrea took Ryan’s seat and propped her elbow on the counter and rested her head on it.

“It’s crazy. We’ve added three hundred new cases in my hospital alone.” Her sister worked in a London hospital and she had been growing increasingly concerned about her exposure to the virus.

“And you’re being careful right?”

“Yes, big sis I am. How about you? What’s happening down there?”

Andrea stood up and began to wipe down the already clean counter. “We have a few cases and we’re on lockdown for the next week. No one can come in except nationals and residents.”

“Wow. What about all those bookings you had?” Andrea could hear the concern in her voice.

“Poof!” Andrea mimed an explosion and sat down. “It’s all gone. I don’t have one client left.”

“Oh my God. What are you going to do?”

Andrea explained about trying to sell freshly baked bread but being shot down for it.

“I did the math and even if I did get to sell bread, there are more established bakeries who will get priority. I’m the new kid on the block and I would need to sell much more bread than I can make in this kitchen for it to be a financial success.”

“You don’t need success right now. Focus on keeping the lights on. What is the bank offering for mortgages and loans?”

“I’ve already applied for delayed payments. But if this thing sticks around for six months, I won’t be able to resume payments. I need something that will keep me going long term. There’s no way I can wait for travel to come back.”

“You need some new options. You’re incredibly good with social media. How can you use your accounts to sell something people want that won’t get you in trouble with the police?”

“I’ve been racking my brain trying to figure this out. Most of my audience are people who aspire to travel. They can’t go anywhere now so what do I sell them?”

“Aspire is the key word, I think. You’ve got more than ten thousand people on your account, but would you say less than one percent of them book a trip right?”

Andrea looked at her sister baffled. “I am not sure where you are going with this. But you are right.”

“You continue to sell aspirations. That is still what people want. To dream about travelling until they can. What can you sell to feed that desire?”

Andrea thought for a minute. She recalled an email newsletter for travel experts that suggested virtual tours and experiences. She had scoffed at the idea because she had no plans to ever go on camera or post more than cool looking pictures. But her sister was on to something. She had a ready audience. They were waiting to hear from her.

“I don’t have a camera or any lights for something like this.”

“Whoa. You’re jumping ahead of me. What did you come up with?”

“A travel expert suggested we sell virtual travel tours or teach something people want to learn.”

“Oh, that is right up your alley sis.” Andrea could hear the excitement in her sister’s voice.

“Why do you say that?”

“I have called you ten times since you left for how to make soup and you’ve answered me with the same level of patience and clarity every time. You can do this. Teach how to make the recipes that you create for your VIP guests.”

“You want me to give away trade secrets?”

Vicky laughed. “You can do the session live. Promote it on your social media and send an email invite. They sign up and pay. You tell them what ingredients to have and you all bake or cook together. A virtual cooking class. Wine is a must. You can do this.”

Andrea could see the idea come to life in her head. She didn’t have a fancy camera, but she had the latest smartphone and lots of memory. It was possible with some practice.

Chapter 3

David had to confess his disappointment as he peeked out the window near his work desk. His neighbor seemed to have changed her mind about the bread baking business. There had been no more lines of cars parked outside at o'dark thirty for the past three days. The last two rolls from the batch she had given him had been consumed with his one AM dinner. Now he had no desire to make breakfast before heading off to bed, but he was hungry. A couple of those rolls would have done the trick.

His clock was all screwed up, but it had been that way for the past seven years since he began his own software development business. His working hours were hell on relationships and so he had ended his last on again off again friends-with-benefits deal before moving to Montserrat. Not that he had been looking, but no woman had intrigued him enough before his neighbor, Andrea.

He had given in on his last coffee break and googled her. She ran a virtual travel agency, and he figured the bread baking was a desperate measure to make some money, given that the tourism sector had taken a hit globally. He had been asked to defer bills for three large clients in Australia and two in Vietnam. The pandemic had businesses small and great scrambling for a way to survive. He wondered how she was fearing. What could he do to help her?

He picked up the note she had sent with the bread and read it again. He knew it by heart but that did not stop him from reading it more times than he cared to count. He should say thank you. There was no number on it. He wasn't supposed to go over there.

He decided to resurrect his Instagram page and send her a message. As he searched for her account, he discovered there were two. He decided to message her business page to keep things more formal. He thanked her for the bread and wondered if there was any way she could still drop off bread every two days, which he was happy to pay for.

David sat there staring at the blank inbox for ten minutes before a yawn took over. He shook his head at his folly when he realized her house was in darkness and he needed to go to bed.

The powers that be, had rejected her application for a catering permit. She would need a health certificate and that office would be closed for the foreseeable future. Andrea had been holding out hope that it would come through. Catering and delivering food would have been easier to handle than the only option she was left with. Turning on the camera and going live to teach classes.

Ryan was down for his afternoon nap, and she figured it was a good time to design flyers and plan out the live cooking class. Her Instagram inbox was flashing with a message. It was from an account that she did not recognize but it had just followed her.

“O M gee!” she said out loud. It was from her neighbor, David.

The message was very formal and serious, and she wondered if he ever smiled or knew how to have fun. He wanted more bread. She could do that without breaking the law she supposed. Drop it off on his doorstep as she had done a few days before. She thanked him for the offer and agreed that he would have a fresh batch of bread in the morning.

The message remained unseen. Scrolling his feed, she realized he was a software engineer and figured that was why he was usually only up at night. It probably meant he was sleeping even now. Just in case, she peeked out the window but there was no movement on his side.

Moving back to her desk, she focused on designing a few Instagram stories and a newsletter inviting fans to join her class. She considered going live for a few minutes, but she was too nervous.

Do a live video.

The notification of a message from her sister popped up.

She shook her head as if her sister could see her.

Put on some red lipstick and that sexy T-shirt that says Cooks Like it Hot and promote the darn thing.

Her sister was a piece of work.

You can't let my nephew starve.

That prompted Andrea into action. Ryan was her heart and she never wanted anything to happen to him. She checked on him still fast asleep in the day bed in the playroom and went to change her top and freshen her face.

She posted that she would go live in ten minutes to build anticipation and made a few notes of what she wanted to say.

Heading into the kitchen with her notes, she created a makeshift tripod with her cookbooks and a box of cereal. She tried sitting in front of it but didn't like the look. She didn't feel in control just sitting there with nothing to do with her. She stood and checked the lighting from different directions before settling on the angle which showed off her sparkling stainless steel and black appliances. It would mean she had to hold the phone with one hand, but it would have to do for today. She'd have to figure something out before the classes began.

She clicked to go live and took a deep breath as the timer counted down. Pasting a big grin on her face she began her spiel.

Her sister was the first to join, but that quickly changed as more and more of the travelers who she had booked trips for logged on and sent her greetings. She expressed her excitement at having them on with her and how disappointed she was that their trips had to be cancelled.

Andrea was relieved with the prompt Vicky gave to remind her of why she had created the live event. She invited them to join her in two days for the live cooking session. They would learn to make some of the tasty dishes they would have enjoyed on island and her favorite dessert for being stuck inside.

As she was wrapping up the video, she noticed that David's account joined. He sent a bunch of hearts which made her smile even more. He commented that he would be joining the class and a few others did as well. Now, there was no way she could chicken out. She had actual students ready to learn with her.

Ryan woke up and she fed him a snack. He was feeling fussy, so she spent time cuddling and playing with him. It was another half an hour before she could check her messages and emails.

David had been true to his word. He'd completed the form to register for the class. There were three other forms as well. She calculated what that would be in revenue and realized this had the potential to be a recurring income stream that could make a difference.

David had also sent a heart in response to her agreement to supply his bread, which made her smile.

How do you want me to pay you for the bread and the class?

Andrea sighed. That question had come up when she was trying to sell bread. A few people had wanted to use a credit card to pay her, but she would lose much more than the bread was worth by the time she converted it to local currency. She did not mind overseas clients paying into her overseas bank account but for local clients, it would help if she could get the money to use for paying bills here.

She replied that she was unsure what was the best option.

The phone in her hand rang with an unknown number. She answered, figuring it would be David.

"Hello Andrea." He really had a nice voice. She loved the way her name sounded on his lips.

"Yes, this is Andrea. Is this David?" She fingered her hair then rolled her eyes when she realized what she was doing. Not as if he could see her.

"It is. Thanks again for the bread and agreeing to be my regular supplier. I forgot to get some when I was out shopping so you saved me from starvation."

Andrea laughed. "Glad I could help."

“About your payment issue. That’s a recurring problem for entrepreneurs in the Caribbean. I have a suggestion for you. It’s still being tested but I believe it could help you with collecting payments.”

“I have a UK bank account so you can pay me there if it’s a problem. I don’t know about trying something which is untested.”

Andrea kept an eye on Ryan who had curled up in the chair with a book. She could hear him pretend to read it. He knew a few words but this one was several grades above his level, but he enjoyed the pictures in it.

“It’s a new digital cash system. The central bank has already approved it, we are running beta tests for it now to see how people use it and what we need to tweak to improve its user friendliness. You won’t lose any money in the transactions. What people pay you is what you will get.”

“Really? What’s the catch?”

“No catch,” he sounded as if he was smiling. She wondered what he looked like when he smiled. “The savings is in the bank not having to purchase or secure last quantities of paper currency. Money costs money to make.”

“I guess it would. What do I need to do?”

“I will send you a link to the website where you can register your information. It’s on the official banking site and you can check that it is secure. Once that is entered, you will receive instructions on how to embed the payment details in your website or the link of your choice? Do you have a secure website?”

Andrea paused. She wasn’t sure.

“The travel site is part of a franchise network. What I want to do with the classes is personal, so I guess I need another website.” She sighed. More money she did not have to spend.

“No worries. It doesn’t need to cost you an arm and a leg.”

“Only an arm them?”

He laughed and she loved the sound of it. “Not even that. Keep the bread coming and you have a new website with all the bells and whistles.”

“Uh. That does not seem like a fair trade.”

“I can do this with my eyes closed Andrea. Let me do this for you please. May I use the email address I found online for you? I’d like to send you a short form for you to give me some basic details and I can work up a template for you to look over.”

“Don’t you have paying client work?”

“I do but I’m all caught up for now. I can work on this tonight if you like and have something for you to review in the morning.”

Andrea walked to the window of her living room and stared outside. She saw movement at his house and the window opened. He stuck his head out and waved at her. She waved back. What did she have to lose?

They spoke for a few minutes longer and he promised to send the form as soon as he hung up.

True to his word, a detailed web form was in her email. She had expected a version similar to the one she sent, but this one was coded and depending on her answer, new questions popped up. Andrea had to think up a business tag line on the spot, select colors for the site and sample layouts that she thought would fit her look.

She had not given much thought to how she would stream the classes and David’s form had made suggestions as to how she could do so. She could even get the videos to use after to resell as a course. This was too much. She had not even given a class yet and she already felt as if she had succeeded.

An automated reply confirmed her form had been received. A wave of disappointment hit her. She would have liked it if it had another phone call. What was wrong with her? The man had a life and a job. She would have to wait and see what he came up with.

Chapter 4

David hadn't exaggerated how long it would take for him to build Andrea a new website. In fact, the toughest part had been designing her logo. He had decided to do it himself rather than send it off to one of his coders in India. From the moment she'd clicked submit on the form, the software had compiled the code for her website, down to the colors and the main pages she wanted to have. All that was needed was for her to select one of the two logo options he created.

He had embedded the course platform with the facilities to go live with the click of a button. The payment options for both local digital cash and credit cards had also been integrated.

He had to thank his sisters for making his web design work easier.

Once he had decided he was leaving the UK, he'd sat all three of his sisters down and told them he was no longer going to be topping up their income. He required each of them to come up with a digital business idea they wanted to start, and he would design the platforms free of charge. None of them had known where to start and he had created the basic web design form as a guide. Janelle, the baby of the family, had been the most indecisive and he had gotten frustrated trying to work out what she wanted. To avoid constant clashes, he embedded multiple options and variables based on her choices. From there, it had been easy to translate their desires into the web code, without the use of multiple third-party plugins.

By the time his sisters' online businesses were up and running, he had completed the web development program and his company's business had tripled. It had become especially useful since the pandemic as more businesses moved online.

David emailed the two logo ideas and was taken aback when he received a response a few minutes later.

He made the adjustment she suggested to the logo she selected and uploaded it to the website. Once he was satisfied that all the links

worked, he sent her a message via her Instagram inviting her to view the site on her mobile.

How did you do that so quickly?

He smiled at the question and promptly responded.

It's all code. Nothing to it.

She replied with big eyes.

Why are you still up?

He laughed as both asked the same question at the same time.

This is when I do my best work.

It was true. He had always been a night owl even as a little boy and it had distressed his mother to no end.

I'm kneading the bread.

He wished he could be there to see her do it. Was she doing it by hand, or did she have a machine?

They spent the next few minutes messaging back and forth. Just as he wanted to pick up the phone to call, she said good night and signed off.

He was disappointed but he had to deal with that. She had a young boy who he was sure demanded a lot of attention. If she was going to get up early to bake bread and prepare for her coming class, she needed sleep. When she was up with her son, he'd be fast asleep.

David wished her goodnight and went to write some client proposals he had been putting off.

Andrea was tempted to cancel the class. Ryan had been fussy all day and he had begun to run a fever. Rather than give in to the frustration, she pulled out his plastic pool and filled it with water. They both changed into swimwear and played in it for an hour. By the time he was finished, she made him an early dinner, read him a story and he went to bed half an hour before his usual time.

Class was in ninety minutes, but she felt unprepared. All the ingredients lined the counter and she had shined the appliances within an inch of removing the steel coating.

Check your front porch.

What had David put there now? When she had gone to deliver his bread earlier that morning, she had found a box of gadgets that she could use for live streaming. He'd given her a high-resolution web cam, a desk tripod, and a mini ring light.

Andrea picked up the package which was wrapped with white paper as if from a printer and string that had seen better days.

She tore it open and laughed as she read the cover of the binder. David's three-step guide to doing live video.

He had taken the time to design a hilarious cover which showed him as a professor standing in front of a blackboard with the words written on it. A few students could be seen slouched in boredom or fast asleep at their desk.

Andrea giggled as she read the first instruction. *Keep a glass of wine close by. If words fail, tell everyone to take a sip.*

She could go for that. She already had a wine glass on standby next to the bowls ready for the meal. The pinot grigio was chilling.

The second instruction made her laugh out loud. *In case the recipe goes all wrong, just add wine.*

The third instruction made her gush and had her reaching for her phone.

"Should I be worried that you're encouraging me to drink so much wine?"

His chuckle warmed her down to her toes. "Which is why I hope you will take me up on number three.

"Soon as I say good night. I will be on the back porch waiting to share the leftovers with you."

“I can hardly wait. You’re going to do great.”

“Thanks for all your help. The website seems to be a big hit. I spent all day adding photos and recipes to it. Three more people will be joining the class.”

“I’m really happy for you. Let me go and get ready. Thanks for picking something easy tonight. I had all the ingredients.”

“I’m glad. I didn’t want to make an excuse for not doing the class. Figured if I used basic food items most people would have them. We can save fancy for the session two.”

“Sounds like a plan teach. I will see you online in a few.”

“Thank you for all your help. I won’t be able to repay you.”

“Glad I could help. Later.”

Andrea checked on her son before going back to fiddle with her setup. The camera was fully charged, and she had her phone as a backup in case something went wrong. Ten minutes before she would go live, she put on her apron and logged into the website to the live feed.

David had sent easy to follow instructions on how to add her details to the titles which would open the class. It gave the presentation a very professional feel. No one needed to know that two days before she had no clue how to do this.

She put on a big smile as the clock countdown began. The minute the camera light turned green she began to teach her first class on making spaghetti and Italian meatballs.

Chapter 5

David looked up as the back door opened. The light shining made her a silhouette, but he felt rather than saw the smile on Andrea's face.

"Congratulations," he said as she came to sit next to him. Before he chickened out, he reached over and kissed her cheek.

She looked at him in surprise and he winked.

"Thank you. I'm so glad that's over." She looked up at the sky, which seemed devoid of stars. Her elegant neck begged for his kiss.

"Well, I will have spaghetti and meatballs for a few days but at least I know it tastes good. Don't tell my mother, but yours is better."

"I told you to cut the recipe in half." She nudged him with her shoulder, and he nudged right back.

"I didn't have a measuring cup, so I just dumped the entire bag in the pot."

Andrea gasped and shook her head.

"Anyway, a toast." David grabbed the bottle that he'd stored in the cool grass and produced two wine glasses. He handed one to her then poured the white wine.

"You came prepared."

"Well, I'm not even sure that you should be drinking anymore wine after what you did to that bottle on air." David quirked an eye at her then took a sip from his glass.

Andrew bent her head between her knees and groaned. "I am so ashamed. I can't tell you the last time I drank so much."

"I'm surprised you're still standing."

"That's my strong constitution. I won't get drunk until after the second bottle, but I will sleep like a baby tonight." Andrea took a sip of the wine then laid her head on his shoulder.

“You should probably be getting to bed then soon.”

“In a minute,” she yawned. “I wanted to tell you thank you for everything. You made it so easy.”

“Glad I could help. Must be tough losing all of your business like that.”

David heard her sigh. He wanted more than anything to make her sighs a thing of the past. How odd, a woman sighing had never bothered him before.

“Do you think it would be okay if I gave away the bread? I won’t be selling it or anything.”

“Well people won’t be able to come to the house. How will you distribute it?”

“I can do what I do for you. Leave it on their doorstep. I won’t go far. Just the neighbors around this loop. It’s a shame to have that flour sitting there and I have a bread machine that will make it easier.”

“Still, that’s a lot of baking. I wish I could help.”

Andrea looked up at him, then drew closer and kissed his cheek. “You already helped more than I can say. How about you deliver to one side of the loop and I do the next? If we do it during exercise hours, then it should be kinda alright you think?”

“I have no idea. We’ll give it a try and pray we don’t get caught.”

He honestly had not read the fine print about the lockdown. As he hardly left his house except to get food, the idea of being inside for a week or two did not bother him.

“Deal. I should go and set some dough up then. Bake them in the morning.”

David nodded. He would have liked to come inside to help. Just being in her company was doing good things to his spirit. He’d never felt this happy before.

“Don’t stay up too late. It will be morning before you know it.”

“I won’t,” she replied standing and reaching towards the sky in a big stretch.

David stood and placed his hands on her shoulders and began to squeeze the tension from them.

“Oh. That feels so good,” a sound of pleasure escaped her lips.

He paused for a second before continuing. She was tense. It was understandable given her concerns about money and then taking a leap of faith and selling a cooking class for the first time. She had had a busy couple of days. Hard to imagine a week ago, he’d only seen her from afar.

“How about I make you a deal? We’ve got a couple of days left before this lockdown is lifted. How about we go to the beach on Saturday? A swim would do you good. Ryan and I can kick a ball around in the meantime.”

“Great idea. Only one thing wrong with the plan?”

“We’re not supposed to hang about with people not of our household even on the weekends.”

David groaned. “Who comes up with this stuff?”

He stopped the massage and pulled her back against his chest. She felt good there, with her head tucked into his neck.

“I like the way you feel in my arms,” he declared.

She turned and put her arms around his neck. “I like it too.”

“New plan,” he said rubbing her back gently.

“What?” she said, looking up at him.

“When this lockdown is over, you and I go on a date. In fact, several dates.”

“How many is several?”

He laughed and kissed her on her forehead. “As many as is required to make sure by the next lockdown we will be one household and not two.”

She gasped but it was quickly replaced with a sweet sigh as he placed his lips on hers.

THE END