



The Lockdown Monster

by Victoria Cooper

A couple are embracing in a kitchen. Harriet is sobbing loudly onto Henry's shoulder

Harriet: Oh Henry, I don't know what to do. How are we ever going to beat this monster?

Henry: Harriet, we must stay strong, I know we can do it, we just have to believe in ourselves.

Harriet: Oh, for fuck's sake Henry shut up. I'm serious. Ever since lockdown I haven't been able to stop. I didn't even know who Joe Wicks was until two weeks ago. Now I can do fifty star jumps and twenty burpees without even breaking into a sweat.

Henry: But darling that's brilliant, you're amazing. Think about your mental wellbeing, your stress bucket must be completely empty

Harriet: Empty! Are you joking? Henry it's not just the exercising by YouTube, it's the yoga, the Pilates, the baking classes by Zoom. It's the friggin' sour dough starter stinking out the cupboards.

Henry: Oh, that's what it is. I wondered what you were making.

Harriet: I just can't go on Henry. The mindfulness, the Duolingo Japanese classes and all that live streaming of National Theatre I want to vomit.

Henry: Yes, I saw you watching that Phoebe Waller thingy. Was it any good?

Harriet: No, it wasn't good. It didn't even have the hot priest in it and I had to watch it with 5 million other idiots inanely chatting alongside it.

Harriet tears some tissue from a large pile of toilet roll stacked up on the work surface.

It's just endless Henry, the online decluttering ideas, the virtual writing workshops. I just can't stand the buffering.

Henry: Oh, darling I understand, I am sure once we go back to work, if we can after furlough, I'm sure

Harriet: ... It has to stop Henry. I just want to laze about in my pyjamas like we used to do; without anyone bloody watching us on their laptop.

Henry: I know this is hellish. But we have to fight it. We have to believe that one day we will shop for non-essential items and not worry about feeding a family of four on a packet of super noodles and a celery stick.

Harriet: I know you're right. It's just more than any of that, more than the baking, the endless yoga and the skype calls with your mother in the bath. I just want one thing. One tiny thing. I just want the children to go back to school.