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## Locked up Lockdown

by Sue Hitchcock

“Would you like a crisp?”

Jilly had sensed that the young man opposite her in the train had been looking at her, but this was the first time he had caught her eye.

“Thank you! Mmm... cheese and onion, my favorite.”

“Mine too, of course.”

Jilly returned to her I-phone, where she had been scrolling through some music on you-tube. The young man looked smart, in an old-fashioned way and seemed keen to befriend her.

“Another?”

“No, thanks.” she smiled and turned towards the window.

“What are you listening to?” He moved across to sit next to her, so she offered him an ear-bud for him to listen.

“Great! I'm sure they performed in Brighton last month. If they're on again soon, would you come with me?”

It was a tempting offer! “Maybe.”

Before he got off at Burgess Hill, he had got her to swap telephone numbers.

During the next few weeks, they met up on the train almost every evening returning from work and Jilly was flattered to see him struggle through the other commuters to find her. The trip to the club to hear the group perform was a treat, and he didn't try to take her to his place, but took her home in a very proper fashion. It was very late and it seemed silly for him to go home, when they both had to catch a train in the morning, so Jilly made the first suggestion that he might stay. He was so sweet and polite, it would surely be fine.

Kevin was more enthusiastic than she had expected, but it was the beginning of a promising relationship. When he stayed, he got up early and brought her coffee in bed, so she was never late for work. He always finished in the bathroom beforehand, so he wasn't in her way. She couldn't believe how considerate he was.

Then in February there were rumours of a nasty flu virus, which they disregarded in their private intimacy, but when the lockdown was announced, Kevin said he could not live without her. What could they do? It was obvious. It was time to move in together. Jilly had still never visited Kevin's flat and he said it would be impossible, as he shared with another guy. He would have to move in with her.

Jilly was uncertain - it was a pretty small bed-sit. He insisted it would be fine and arrived in a run-down V.W. the next evening. Jilly was cooking and didn't notice the clothes he was squeezing into the wardrobe. When she dished up dinner, he was pushing an exercise bike through the door.

"Here, help me with this!"

"You haven't brought everything, have you?"

"Oh, I can't afford the rent, so I'm here now!"

"But there's no room!"

"Be kind, Darling! I have to be with you."

Jilly took a long bath that evening. She locked the door so she could have a think. The optimistic feelings she had had at the beginning of a loving, devoted, considerate partner seemed to have evaporated. They seemed to be greater strangers than before. How long, she wondered, would this lockdown last?