

Six Feet Apart: Love in Quarantine

Elena Greyrock

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Six Feet Apart is a charming, COVID-inflected romance about love during an unending lockdown.

In Elena Greyrock's timely and quirky romance novel, *Six Feet Apart*, people have acclimated to rolling flu seasons, but—socially distanced or not—love still finds a way to join two unlikely people together.

Luna is young and lives in New York City; she manages social media for a fashion magazine. But her romantic future seems bleak, especially because the city is under lockdown. Because of COVID-25, people in the US have to be tested on a regular basis or face deportation.

There's a dash of speculative fiction involved in the book and its futuristic setting. Luna works through interminable virtual meetings; these are punctuated by virtual dates, virtual workouts, and virtual cocktail hours. Lonely and bored, she tries apps, then abandons them, too. Just as she's given up on love, she meets Stryker, a thrill seeker and aspiring musician with a bohemian streak. A flashback catches him going to Burning Man for a spiritual reset; he muddles through a surreal, drug-soaked tent city with a grizzled spirit guide. It's an interjection of veracity and wit into an otherwise a boilerplate romance—because, like Luna, Stryker is burned out on dating, too.

The chapters are written from Luna and Stryker's alternating perspectives. Their romance begins in a tentative manner, but soon escalates toward physicality. Luna, who's young and naïve, shows her love by launching Stryker's musical career with an influencer-heavy event. His success makes both of them question how well they really know each other, whether they can trust one another, and what "commitment" means when a new partner is just a swipe away.

Luna's voice is fresh and bubbly, while Stryker's is cynical; supporting characters, including Luna's gay, Latina friend Santana, are constructed in a somewhat stereotypical manner. But while Luna and Stryker's relationship is often predictable, the world they live in is less so. COVID-25 taints every aspect of life, as seen when Luna observes a woman at the supermarket "dressed in a full body white hazmat suit with plastic booties over her shoes," embodying the ultrahygienic new normal. But human needs for connection are unchanged, and tantalizing descriptions of omnipresent dating, rideshare, and work apps combine with "retro" technology to highlight this tension, including a mention of a boombox that Luna uses for self-directed Zumba classes. As Luna chooses to take risks with her body and her heart, she hopes Stryker will do the same.

Featuring plenty of mishaps and face masks, *Six Feet Apart* is a charming, COVID-inflected romance about love during an unending lockdown.

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