

Interview: Lisa

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Attendance:

Lucia Ruggerone – LR

Charlie Hackett – CH

Lisa

Emotions have been added into the transcript as i.e. [*sadness*] and interviewers have been placed in bold and italicised. Any sections that need to be checked for accuracy such as phrases in other languages or names of places I couldn't confirm the spelling of have been highlighted in red.

LR: Now we can all see your work.

L: Yeah.

LR: Which I've got here. Can you see it?

L: Yeah.

CH: WOW! That's amazing.

L: Sorry for that, it's very childish. [laughing]

LR: No it's great.

CH: No! It's not childish at all! If my students did that they'd be getting top grade. I love it honestly.

L laughs.

LR: Yeah I'm not the best one to judge any artwork. I'm not you know I teach sociology I've never been great at drawing or anything.

CH: That's a feeble excuse Lucia.

LR: Well I'll leave that to you Charlie but anyway let's crack on I mean I think we should maybe ask Lisa to start describing.

CH: Lucia could you just turn off your outlook.

L: So yeah this artwork like it represents like my mood haha during lockdown so on the left hand side where is my house so that's you know a home. A house slash home because of course during lockdown we were locked in basically in my very small apartment in (Burminsey??) but also it felt quite protected because my partner was at home. I didn't have to take a tube to go to work. I live in London it's quite mad here, to commute so in a way it felt like a positive experience to be at home. I mean I work in a advertising tech, and it's a bit of a joke the people that stay at home, it's almost like a holiday you know when you work from home and at the beginning it felt a lot like that. We were

together also like back then I wasn't yet pregnant but I got pregnant during lockdown and it was a conscious decision because we felt times were changing with this terrible pandemic but at the same time for us it meant that. My partner works in finance which is historically is very face to face could finally work from home and it's been a big discussion between the two of us in the last like whatever years, like five six years we've been together where I was telling him many times. At the time our son was two why can't you work from home every now and then, why can't you do some drop off at the nursery? And he was like I cannot because my work cannot be done at home and all of a sudden this crazy situation meant that his company had to change and mine too the way they were set up and it turned out he could work from home hahah and me too so that meant we could spend a lot of time together instead of a couple of hours a day. So for me that part of the artwork has some positive connotation because of course we were together. Of course we had a child, a toddler at home so it was hard but I felt all of a sudden this support as a working mother in everywhere. In Italy and the UK you feel quite lonely and you feel that the burden of childcare and all of a sudden that burden was lifted from me for him too. My partner is very supportive so we were sharing, we were having lunch together, we would like look after the child. Like he would do some meetings in the morning and I would bring the child to the local park and then we'd swap so... So it was lots of family time, lots of love because we felt like we re-connected and we decided that if times were changing that was maybe a good time to have a second child then I got pregnant. It was quite quick. So hence the heart and my pregnancy, was a girl and I really wanted a girl so that's why the pink. So my first one was a boy so was also good news. You know I could sleep a bit, it was not commute, there was lots of talking about the future so there is the positive. So I felt guilty because I knew many people were not having positive experience from lockdown and I did at the beginning and also when I got pregnant to be fair because then there was the second lockdown in winter and I was pregnant and no one could go out and no one could drink so I felt like my fomo – sorry my fear of being seen out hahah was actually fine because like ok I'm stuck at home I can't do anything I can't eat, I can't drink so that's the positive part. Then of course *[sigh]* it was very hard at the same time because I'm Italian so my whole family was in Italy, my parents are 80, not yet so they're so 78 so I'm going to add years. So right hand side that's the dark side so the little men is me and my huge thinking.

CH: Are they really men going to the right yeah?

L: Yeah. Sorry I'm going to the right now. With the little stick man it's me and those bubbles it's my thinking. So I suffer from anxiety, like a general anxiety disorder and so for me was like my head was going mental because I was watching a lot of Italian news and as Lucia might know it's a very different treatment that this virus had in Italy versus the UK. So here of course there was this sense of I don't know, we knew it was hard but it felt like in the streets that people were not wearing masks that much at least in London. I don't know in Scotland, maybe Scotland was different. People were still allowed to go out and you know I was watching every night Italian talk show. So Italian television as basically a talk show per night, it's something that we love like it's a formal that we love and I was watching every night something and it was all about Covid every single. Even (???) like it still is. So there was this description, harrowing description you know of the death in Bergamo. It was very a sense of doom and despair that came from the Italian news. It was very anguished for me so at night it was all like a constant train of thought about you know what's going on, will my parents survive this and of course especially them, will I see them again. So that's the main, and Italy you know in my thoughts like how are my friends *[voice breaking up in sadness]* when am I going to be able to go home. Also like my mum wanted to come at some point I don't know during the both lockdown really because I was pregnant. So the first one she wanted to escape heh Italy and help us with our toddler because the nursery closed and in the second one because I was pregnant and of course she couldn't and it was a lot of conversation with her, with my sister, with my father about

you know trying to convince her not to do that. There were still flights but of course it was very dangerous and she is a person who just doesn't think about danger much like she was quite reckless. She was going out still in Italy like despite all the rules and she missed a lot being out and doing things with her friends so there was also all this kind of conversation constantly going on and all the zoom call with them. So yeah I guess the way my mood was on lockdown was like this heh so anguish for my family and for Italy my country and my parents specifically and also after when the vaccine roll out I mean in Italy. It took ages before they actually started. It was a sense of like frustration and then at the same time feeling guilty that I was somehow having some gain out of it which was I mean having my partner at home and you know spending a lot of time together as a family and enjoying my pregnancy. So that's like more or less what this artwork means. I don't know if it makes sense?

LR: Yeah, makes a lot of sense.

CH: Are there big lightning flashes?

L: Yeah that's the storm, in the sense of stormy weather versus like hot weather. The sense of darkness. If I think back last year there is a lot of darkness and also another aspect I forgot. Work. So it's true that I was working from home so the commute aspect was gone and that was a good thing but I worked ten times more and I think a lot of people who work in offices can relate. Somehow they cut all the social aspect of working so you wouldn't have a coffee anymore, you wouldn't have to commute anymore, it was so bland and into a very long day that would start at eight thirty instead of half nine sometime and till like I don't know six thirty of constant calls and work non-stop and never you know have a break. Like we used to go out for lunch and so my partner was in and that helped a lot but I worked like a mad person to the verge of breaking really. To the point that when I was eight months pregnant, nine months pregnant I had to call in sick for three weeks because they weren't even considerate during my pregnancy. It was so much work going on and again a sense of guilt because many other people got you know made redundant but my industry, digital industry thrived really. Our clients, we work mainly with charities, our clients needed us desperately to help them filling the gap, the digital divide so we had to have them you know running remote workshop and using zoom and using new. So it was a constant. I was dealing with a lot of problem and people complaining and people being anxious about you know their jobs and so... that is the darkness and the storm was also on my mental health because it was very hard working.

LR: Yeah the workload was very heavy I mean to the point of burnout.

L: Yeah, yeah almost burnout yeah.

LR: Yeah plus when you're pregnant you should be a bit more relaxed you know or you should try to take it easy.

L: Also the tricky part was that I didn't have to commute so there were also like yeah your pregnant but you're at home you know. I mean you're working in front of a screen but it's like it's really exhausting when you're making a human being because you're very tired. *[laughing]*

LR: It's a lot of stress on the body. Very tiring so. Yeah can I ask what the two buttons are?

L: It's just the face. *[laughing]* It was just to make the sad face and I wanted to use some of the lovely stuff I got. The rest I gave to my son. *[laughing]* So it's a big sad man, anguished man.

LR: And I like the contour, the border of this kind of balloon which is all dark and black so that's really conveys the anguish and the worry.

CH: I think that's silver. Lucia.

LR: Is it?

L: Say it again sorry?

CH: It's silver at the edge. Is that like one of those pipe cleaners?

L: Sorry I did not understand.

LR: No I think you drew that. You drew that edge? That black edge right?

L: No no I didn't draw it. It's a nose hold.

CH: Pipe cleaner?

L: Yeah.

LR: Oh ok, great!

L: So I glued it, actually I Sellotaped it.

LR: That is very good. What is the yellow bit on the left hand side of the drawing? The yellow bit in the heart is it the?

L: It's me pregnant. So basically, it's a little head and that's the pregnancy belly with the baby inside.

LR: Ok that is great!

CH: That's so cool.

L: *[laughing]* Yeah there's also two legs there. Basically the heart is me, I'm inside the heart, pregnant and there's this massively sign of girl. Yeah I did it like in ten minutes with my son screaming around me so probably not.

LR: No it's good. It's really good. It's creative.

CH: I like the way you split the picture in half.

L: Yeah. Cause that's how I feel. I have something very positive. I have good memories and I also have a memory of getting in contact with a lot of people that I would otherwise don't talk to. All of a sudden everyone was having like a zoom, I don't know if it was the same for you, but like a zoom chat and dinner and pub quiz. It went crazy at one point but it was also quite fun because we would organise quite a lot of calls with friends in Italy and in England, also in Ireland because my partner is Irish. So there was a side of me that has a good memory of it and a terrible memory at the same time when I think about my family and work and the stress of all of it. So it's really dual for me, my experience of lockdown.

LR: Did you ever manage to go back to Italy during this period?

L: In summer I did yeah. So when they lift out I think July was when we immediately went to Italy. To be fair another element that made it particularly not that stressful for me travel wise is that we tried to do two trip, three trips that year. Like it was one of the years that we travelled the most because we were in Tenerife in March just before the first lockdown. It was like end of February really, we had booked, because we had some extra holiday to use. So we booked this crazy and we never travel in February and that year specifically 2020 we had a holiday. We came back and two days after there was you know mayhem happened. Then of course we stayed, we went to Italy in July

when everything lifted up, so we stayed for about two months because at that point we were working from home so I could work from there so it was quite good. We came home and you know that kind of between July and October 2020, there was a weird sense of it's gone the virus is gone. The denial we were all in before actually we plummeted into a terrible second wave and we managed to go to Greece [*chuckles*] because I was pregnant and I was like let's do a last baby moon. Because I had been in Italy and it seems like a holiday but it wasn't really a holiday because it was with my parents. Living in a tiny place with my parents was just getting them somehow with childcare so my son could go you know, could go to the beach. So we have a small apartment near Venice, I'm from (hometown name) on the seaside so we stayed there in this tiny flat. Me and my husband were my partner, we're not really married. We were working from home and the child our first child, he was going to the beach with my mum and dad so I could part of my pregnancy there and when we came back we were like let's go one last baby moon all together it's going to be the last time the three of us. So we went also to Greece in September.

LR: Lovely!

L: And we came back actually it was October. We came back just before the second lockdown and we never travelled that much. So for us 2020 was actually a year of a lot of trips and we never got Covid! [*laughing*]

LR: Yeah I went to Italy a couple of times that summer in 2020. I went in July like you and then I came back and then I went again in September for just a few days because of things I had to do there. Then sadly I had to go back in December because my dad died. That was really anguishing for me. It was very, it was just a few days but it was horrible and then the same day I was coming back to the UK, to Aberdeen. That same day is when they discovered this English variant. I think it was the Alpha variant and I was in Amsterdam without knowing if my flight to Aberdeen was going to fly or not you know so it was just and I just made it before the whole thing blew up. It was a strange time and also difficult because everything was more difficult. I don't know how you felt when you were travelling. Maybe 2020 was as bad?

L: No it was bad.

LR: I thought you were...

L: The first flight wasn't but all this complications we have now with all this testing and quarantine and understanding what the new rule because in the meantime my mum came in March 2021 so this year when the baby sorry not march. When she got the second vaccination was in April or May and since then, every time my parents travel we need to figure out everything for them because they're not very digitally savvy. So every time writing the passenger location form and we'll book all the test in Italy and here and my mum went to Greece in October this year and we had to sort out everything for her because... I think it's particularly hard on the older generation now because they're figuring all this locator forms and all the test and all these changes. It's quite hard. You have to be quite digital advanced.

LR: Absolutely and if your mum came in March did she have any extra things to do because of Brexit because by then Brexit was in place.

L: So yes I know but no because they only come for a few weeks at a time. You know I don't know if she does something different. Maybe and I don't know but they've been travelling no like my father is here right now. So he's downstairs with the baby and he's came for a month, he's still here. He's

going to stay here till like probably December. I never thought about having to do something different?

LR: You'll probably be alright.

CH: No don't worry Lucia is saying something that's not going to worry you my god.

L: [Laughing] I think if you just come as a tourist it's still fine. The only thing is you need to have a passport so, luckily they have both have passport so if you have the old ID card it doesn't work anymore and I guess of course it gets complicated if you want to stay for longer than I don't know four or five months.

LR: I think it's months yes. It's months. So it's few months without any problems and then after a certain amount of months you have to have a visa or something.

L: Like a yeah, and also there is the health aspect that I've never really looked into but if something happens they probably pay if they need to use the NHS.

LR: Could be.

L: I'm not a hundred percent but I think so though yeah.

LR: I'm not sure because my mum is too old to travel so I don't think she... Well she might I don't know but so far I've always been the one going back.

L: Yeah of course.

LR: Yes and yeah the thing that you didn't describe that is really sticking out from your picture is this big roof asking what is your future.

L: That was in sense of not knowing. So the reason why it's pink it's because for me back then it was a sense of like future getting better because of you know of this new remote working set up that everyone was turning into. So my company and my partners company so in my mind there was a sense of what the futures going to hold. Like how it's going to be after this pandemic, are we still going to go into the office and it was lots of like not going to the office that for me was a key element. So I suffer from anxiety as I said earlier so I struggle with the tube and with every very packed transport so for me actually this pandemic happened at the right time because I hated taking the tube and I hated taking the buses as well and trains. So for me it was just like finally I don't have to travel anymore to go to work. So it was a big question where are we going to move, so we moved in the meantime, I forgot this. We also moved from central London to still London but a bit further up so we're now zone.... Also there was the house, so we bought a house in the meantime and we moved to a new house. Unfortunately as soon as restriction lifted my partner had to go back to work full time like nothing ever happened so all this pink is probably now not that pink anymore.

[laughing] Back then there was this big discussion about what we're gunna' do, what if everything stays you know remote, should we actually move to Italy, maybe trying to keep our jobs and see if we can work from Italy or from Ireland as well a bit more often to see our parents. So it changed to model you know of how we were operating but it feels now that actually things are going back to where they were sadly. [voice breaking up at the end here]

LR: Ok so you did consider that you could maybe stay longer periods in Italy.

L: Yeah but my job. My boss told me many times if you want to spend your pregnancy and give birth in Italy we can, you know, we're fine with that. You can still work from there while you're still working and then we can discuss you know if you can come back to work and stay in Italy. So there

was lots of discussion in my job but not the same. In Finance it's a bit more old school you know. So all the CEO, white, male in their 50's/60's wanted everyone back and you know getting pissed in the pub and controlling everyone. So it's not very family, parent friendly lets say. So my partner had to go back, 6am he leaves the house.

LR: *Wow yeah because you're more out so it's further away from.*

L: Yeah that was very bad for me when I found out. He didn't know of course, they made him believe that things were going to change and then nothing changed and we were actually further away and two children instead of one.

LR: *Of course. So when you moved you were thinking that things would change.*

L: Yeah absolutely, otherwise I wouldn't have moved and I wouldn't have had a second child. So it was just... it happened like we found out during Summer really. Until July everything seemed like you know. We knew he would have gone back maybe once, twice a week which is still feasible and instead in September, change of Management. New CEO who didn't know anyone, so this guy came and was like everyone needs to be in the office from like tomorrow.

LR: *It might still change because now with this new variant.*

L: New variant yeah. Although I heard it's quite, luckily I would say, it's quite mild.

LR: *Yes I heard that. So when you were considering going, did you really think, would you have liked to go back to Italy or to go to Ireland if you could?*

L: I would have gone yeah. Maybe not moved back but we would have definitely spent longer time. Longer periods there, for instance Summer is the typical example where you know having a little child, well next year my son goes to reception so all of that disappear in the sense that schools come first of course but up until then the idea was to go and stay for longer periods, especially for his Italian because of course for me it's very important that he speaks fluent Italian and he speaks Italian with me but of course with school he's losing it a bit. So having more contact with the grandparents, with the aunty and my friends, that would have been very useful and also you know it's not only working from there it's just the flexibility knowing that you can. You can do long weekends you know, going there on a Wednesday and coming back on the Sunday and work from Italy for a couple of days and in the meantime the kids you know can spend time with their grandparents.

LR: *Yes the grandparents are an excellent resource because when my son was young which was quite a while ago I was in Milan and yeah I mean I could work from when he was four months old I could basically go back to work although flexibly because my mum helped me very much.*

L: Yeah my parents now they are almost in their eighties so I don't know how long it's going to last for and my Irish in laws their less hands on. I think it's an Italian thing so he's from ... so he feels less Irish and more UK and so I don't know it's a less invasive culture. So they let their son, so my partner who was also the first born, quite a lot of independence so they don't come as often. My parents are like (rushing/busy sound) always there, always wanting to stay. No no they're also they're amazing, they're like second parents to my children but at the same time they want things done their way and you know.

LR: *Yes there's always pros and cons I remember.*

L: Of course yeah.

LR: Yeah I remember when son was small he was going to the seaside with them every summer. They would take him away for a month to the seaside.

L: That's exactly what I did with my son but I was there too because of Covid. The year before we just left him there and went to Sicily. *[laughing]* He was with them in Venice. So yeah they're an amazing resource but they're very like sometimes they can be a lot.

LR: Invasive. Full on.

L: Yeah very full on in terms of parenting styles and the different while.

LR: Yes I know. My husband though he says that I was fine with James not being too anxious until my mum stuck her nose in. Just to give you an idea.

L: Yeah, this is why my partners parents are not like this at all. They visit they stay a couple of days, they're nice, of course they bring presents etc. etc. but then they back off. They don't yeah.

LR: Can I, I know you don't have much time Lisa so I don't want to extend too much.

L: My father is here, just need to help him out as much as I can.

CH/LR: Yeah.

LR: Can I carry on Charlie or do you want?

CH: Yeah totally.

LR: No I was going to ask Lisa if she can tell me anything about how she felt about Brexit and if that was in any way connected to the rest of the anguish or the rest of the worries during the lockdowns.

L: *[sigh]* So during lockdown *[sigh]* not that much, mainly because the worry was survival honestly more than anything else but definitely Brexit has been... Like I would say that the anguish came way before lockdown with Brexit like from 2016 really and still on. It helps that my partner is Irish so I don't know there is a special treaty with like the UK and Ireland so in a ways it's like EU but its not which helps because of course I didn't have to go through the pain that other parents had to go through with their children because we don't have to do that. My children they can travel easily, they have like an Irish passport and with an Irish passport it's like having a UK passport. So I felt it less than some other friends who were both Italians or like an French person. Two weeks ago a friend of mine, he's Italian, she's French they were stopped at Gatwick because they forgot to add their three year old son to their settled status so they got stopped there for like four five hours to figure out what to do even if the child was clearly their child. You know the child didn't have, even if he was born here in the UK he didn't have the piece of paper so that if I was in that situation probably I would feel even more anguish that while you know while we didn't have many issues travelling. Definitely there is a sense of feeling abandoned that made everything worse. Well if you go around in Supermarkets, I don't know if it's the same in Scotland, here in London they're empty. Empty shelves. It's very difficult to find Italian products now, they're super expensive. So I felt definitely even more disconnected from my country as it's more difficult to find everything that reminds me of my country *[sounding very sad]*. It's yeah... I remember all the story of the lorry drivers stuck, there was at some point that problem as well so we thought oh my god we're stuck here and we also won't have any food. *[laughing]* It feels like you know, I remember thinking about my son and thinking will I have food for him? *[shocked]* I know it's exaggerated but that's how we felt sometimes reading the news.

LR: No it has been the same in Scotland with a lot of empty shelves and for example a silly thing that I noticed that in the Sainsbury where I always go. This year you cannot find a panettone for the love of it. None! I saw one the other day in Tesco, just one you know.

L: Really? You see in London Panettone you can see a lot, to me it's like very....

LR: My god before it was like entire shelves with different brands of Panettone now it's...

L: ohh yeah.

LR: I mean I don't really care too much because I don't even like it that much but it's just a symbol you know.

L: For me you know what it is, it's fresh fruit and veg. It makes me a bit anguish because it's for me it's the way we eat and the way my children eat and I eat and of course we have lots of. There used to be more fresh veg and now I can see it's very difficult to find stuff and often big Sainsburys and Tesco they have empty shelves and things go away like this and all the come from ridiculous countries like South Africa. Australia grapes which is like makes no sense.

LR: Outside Europe of course.

L: Yeah from the you know the commonwealth instead of Europe which is crazy also from an environmental perspective. Not that it's less you know, it should be even stuff coming from Italy they're not very friendly from an environment perspective *[laughing]* but Australia! So yeah and they taste of nothing so that's that.

CH: Lisa did you have to apply for the settlement scheme or?

L: Yeah, yeah of course.

CH: You did. How did you, well Lucia will probably want to ask you that anyway but how did you feel about doing that?

L: So I was worried because I did it quite late. You know I was living in a bit of a fairy-tale. I was very busy with my son up until like I realised the deadline was coming and a few of my friends were like have you done it because you know some people don't get the approval immediately and I was like what do you mean? Because I've been living in the UK for like ten years so I was like what do you mean you don't get the approval and it was like yeah well not always they give you like a not a permanent status but a pre-settled or something like that. So that's when I panicked. I did it, I don't even remember what month it was but it was very close to the deadline and fortunately I got approved immediately and it was quite smooth process for me and I got the settlement status immediately otherwise we would have been different. I know of people for no apparent reason, actually you know what happened, when I applied for the European, oh what's it called? EHIC card I think it's called. E-H-I-C. When I did that for me and my son before going to Italy because of course now we need a card. It wasn't approved, they were like they sent an email saying this is not approved you need to provide more proof that you live in the UK and I remember trying to find bills and proof like my council tax and my national insurance number and it was quite worrying because they didn't tell me why. Also when I felt a sense of oh it's not that granted that I'm here you know. They could question that at any time.

LR: I think they make you feel that nobody can be taken for granted completely. You know you always have to prove that you have to have the right to be here.

L: Exactly yeah and I didn't realise it up until I did that card.

CH: What was your mood and feeling about that? What did you feel?

L: I was very concerned and quite anguished. The thing is, every time I talk about this with my partner it's always don't worry we are marriage so we're fine and the fact that I'm not and we're not married either so. So I guess he was trying to cheer me up a lot saying listen don't worry about this because we got this and you know what we always say to each other is when we feel the situation gets to a point where we feel that this country doesn't want us. We will just we will leave. So we have options, we speak two languages, he speaks Italian too so we still have Ireland and Italy which gives me a sense of I still have somewhere to go if this country rejects me. So I still feel European in London, I never felt a Londoner, I never applied for citizenship. Many friends of mine after a few years applied for, I don't know the process of naturalisation, I don't know how it works but they had at the end you have an English passport. I never really wanted one, I just felt like if they don't want me here I'm just going to leave.

LR: Yeah and you think you could leave potentially. That doesn't scare you?

L: So of course it scares me because I will have to start everything from scratch but I feel like we are like have friends in Italy and somehow we would find a way to find a job. It would be really hard or in Ireland again. So we have two countries we can run away to. Ireland even easier in a way because of course there's more jobs for both of us and so that kind of sense of anguish immediately gets replaced with you know what, if you don't want me then I don't want to be rude but.

LR: Did you ever feel unwanted in London?

L: Ummm... Unwanted no. Sometimes I do feel, recently I felt that my accent was not particularly appreciated by mums. So you know when you are on maternity leave you end up going out to groups and you find like you know mums and have coffee together and I did feel, and it never happened...

CH: NCT? Is that National Childbirth Trust?

L: Yeah yeah I did that but I didn't do that the second time around. I did it with my son and I lost contact with all of them because they all went back to, I don't know one was Australia, one was from Scotland, one was from Poland so I didn't have a close NCT and the second time so now I go out. I'm in an area called ..., maybe you know it. In London and what they call the yummy mummies [laughing]. It's not something the definition I like but you know quite middle class English moms they have children at home because they can't afford to be on maternity for long time and I do feel a bit isolated and I think... I can't be sure you know it's my accent, maybe they just don't like me. [laughing] They're all English and I find it difficult to fit in and I never felt that before because there were always people from every country and now I feel like I don't find many Europeans anymore. [laughing] They all moving now, they're all moving away.

CH: Is that because of Covid as well or?

L: Maybe yeah. You have no idea how many people I know went back to their original countries or left their jobs or moved somewhere else that is not London anyway.

LR: Alright, interesting.

L: Yep.

LR: Yeah I can see what you mean yeah. I think it's also the environment that makes you feel that way. I mean even in Scotland. Scotland is pro-Europe but the other night I phoned a restaurant on

a Sunday. We wanted to go out because my son was home and they said, first they said oh let me have a look and after a while they came back and said no we are sorry we can't fit you in or something and I don't know why I got in my head that it was because of my accent so after half an hour or so I just went to my husband who is Scottish and said you phone now and see if they confirm or if they give us a table and actually they confirmed that they had no...

L: Fair enough, you become paranoid yeah of course. Yeah I think it's the same I never thought about my accent being a problem and now I'm starting to. It might not be, it might be in our heads.

LR: I don't know I suppose. I suppose in some environments it might even be the right interpretation you know what I mean? I mean you never know.

L: London is still London, it's not England. It's not the UK. It's like a place.

CH: Lisa can I ask you what you wrote, beside your heart there? It says no something?

L: No commute.

LR: No commute ok.

CH: Oh ok.

L: No commute yeah. For me it was just not having to take trains again is like. Especially here.

CH: And beside the right hand side as well you know where you've drawn this map of Italy is it kind of weeping or is it a tear?

L: It's a tear yeah. It's a tear thinking of my country and you know of people in my country, especially my parents and their generation and my uncle. Thankfully they're all fine but it was very scary.

LR: So nothing bad happened to your family during it.

L: So no, I'm very lucky no one got sick like fingers crossed they all got vaccinated and were all fine. I have a friend in Italy who lost her father to Covid in (...) who is the same age as my dad so that was quite hard. We're not like a... it's a friend like it's an acquaintance that I used to know at uni so it's not a close friend but still it was quite difficult because I would picture myself in her shoes and it was quite hard. So I know people who lost relatives to covid but just her after that, you know someone so close. No one else I know thankfully lost anyone. So that helped to be honest.

LR: Yeah it was bad in Italy at the very beginning. It was very bad.

L: Yeah and then it got better. There were...

LR: It's worse here now but...

L: Oh yeah absolutely.

LR: Yeah we'll see what happens.

CH: Lisa I'm interested as well, why is it important to you that your son learns Italian?

L: It's fundamental *[laughing]* because it's my language. It's my culture, it's my language. He needs to know it as a bilingual person so fluently for me it's important. I will never speak to him in English because it's not my language so. I truly believe in bilingual children. It's good for him and it's important for me that he knows my language and he understand the culture that he's coming from

and he's able to talk to grandparents to my friends to understand the jargon to understand the references, cultural references, the same that I had. So yeah, it's very important.

CH: ohkay.

LR: Are you planning on going to Italy soon?

L: Mm go on holiday? So for Christmas maybe, we're still debating what to do because it's very expensive to travel and due to this new variant we don't know what's going to happen in terms of quarantine and tests and it might be you know pain. If not maybe next year February before I go back to work for maybe a week.

LR: Ok. Do you have to go back in person or would you still be able to work from home?

L: I will be able to work from home maybe not full time but I'm sure I can discuss and negotiate. They're still all working from home so they go some time maybe once a week, twice a week. So they have like a hot desk in the office but nothing like what it was before. So I'm still lucky that my company you know is embracing that remote ability.

CH: Quick question, you see the sticks that you made the house with, did you paint those?

L: No no they were painted already.

CH: Ohkay so it looks like there's red at the top.

L: Yeah orange. It's orange.

CH: Ok ok.

L: I used the material that you guys sent me.

CH: And there's a wee thing coming out of your head on the right.

L: It's my hair [laughing] so that's basically me like on the side so you can you see the hair and there is the face, belly and then the two legs.

LR: Yes, yes that's very good. I like the picture very much. Anyway, Charlie have you got other questions?

CH: I mean my only other question is about giving birth during Covid was that stressful?

L: Very stressful. That was the thing that kept me awake the most in the last month. Since I got pregnant actually because with my son I had an emergency c-section and it was a big shock and a big trauma that I still hadn't gotten over. So I had to stay in the hospital for a week and for the entire time I was in so much pain I had a massive infection so my partner was there with me night and day and this time around we didn't know what would happen. We were like wow, by March we think it's going to get better. Actually the worst part of the pandemic. So in the end he couldn't come. So he came for the c-section because we had the c-section and then he had to go. So I spent four or five days in the hospital basically on my own.

LR: The connection is going, at least on my end.

Connection is very bad and sound is extremely garbled so some words are lost as a result.

LR: I can't hear.

CH: Ok don't worry.

LR: That's great. Thankyou.

L: Sorry I don't have a connection.

LR: Ok don't worry I think we're done.

CH: Yeah we're done.

LR: Thank you so much Lisa.

L: Thank you.

LR: OK thank you very much.

CH: Bye.

END OF TRANSCRIPTION