

A Tale of Two Spanish Girls

This is the story of two very different girls, well ladies to be accurate. One is a laid-back work-shy, let-the-world-go-by sort of the person and the other, a real 'go getter' with three jobs and looking for more. One lives in Madrid province and is part Spanish and part, to avoid identification we will say from a country whose work ethic is very strong, oh and by tradition they chew a lot of 'gum'. The other is from Andalucía, Almería in particular. I'll leave it to your powers of deduction to work out which is which.

For the sake of identification we will call the lady from Almería 'A' and our Madrid girl 'M'. I'm not at all convinced by stereotypes but in this case they hold true. Our Almería girl is indeed the work-shy individual, I use the word individual in its fullest context. Both of these ladies are good friends of my partner and myself and wonderful people.

We will discuss 'A' first. She had a business once, the fact that it was ill suited to its location is neither here nor there, it may even have been an unconscious decision, who knows? My partner and I used to visit her at her place of 'work' but more often than not the place was deserted, its doors securely bolted. We did eventually track her down, strangely enough it was in a bar, we asked about the locked doors and her absence. "Oh", she said "If I'm open I get customers". We suggested that this may be beneficial when running a business, but she only partially agreed. "Yes, I want customers, but only when I want them, I don't want them wandering in just when they feel like it" she added. We asked her to elaborate. Firstly, she likes to sleep late, so the mornings were out. Then she likes a glass of wine and a tapa or two. With her digestive system thus awakened she naturally follows this with a full three course lunch. As is the tradition of Almería a lengthy 'sobremesa' follows and this in turn by a siesta. This brings us to six in the afternoon giving her potential customers until nine to avail themselves of her services. So total hours worked are four days (she likes to finish early on a Friday so didn't bother opening at all) by three hours, a total of twelve hours a week. This working week was however academic as she started selling her fixtures and fittings to fund her morning activities. In the end she sold her premises. 'A' was in high glee for a few months until the money ran out. She now spends her time sending her CV for jobs she isn't qualified for because she didn't want the job in the first place.

Girl 'M' lives in the Madrid Mountains, in a very small village, meaning everyone knows of her.

The people of the Village don't mind in the slightest that she finds work for herself it is her perverse belief that others want to work and her labours in finding others employment that is objectionable. She does this quite cheerfully and actually believes she is being public spirited. I have seen her walk into a bar and clear it within five minutes. Armed with her 'filofax' she can reduce the strongest to quivering, sobbing wrecks.

I believe it was the second time I met her, I mistakenly said I was considering working again. Why I said this I'm not certain, I wasn't drunk, as least I don't think I was, no I wasn't I can't remember apologising to anyone. I can only assume I had contracted some virus or other which had elevated my body temperature thus clouding my judgement. The reason why I said this is not important, it was the speed of her response which was horrifying. A few phone calls and I was a potential employee teaching English over the phone. It took some fancy manoeuvring involving not wanting to work antisocial hours and pretending to have paralysis of the vocal chords to get myself off the hook. I still wake up sweating at the narrowness of my escape.

While these stories seem humorous I must point out that I in no way condone this sort of behaviour. To my mind girl 'M' is highly irresponsible being the cause of several citizens packing their bags and taking up residence in remote caves high in the sierra. Of girl 'A' I have a deep understanding and acknowledge the diligence with which she has arranged her affairs.