

All Dressed Up and Nowhere to Go
#2. Literary Fiction - 808 words
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[Carina A. Brunson is currently the editor and co-owner of the Winter Texan Times, a seasonal paper for the Rio Grande Valley's Winter Texans. She has over 15 years of newspaper experience – reporting, writing and editing – and website administration. She has also worked in public relations, marketing and customer service. She is a mother of four, with two still at home, and a wife to her husband (co-owner and publisher of the Winter Texan Times) of over 25 years. She likes crafts, cross stitch, playing with her Cricut, service opportunities, reading and movies with the family. She is a bit of geek type liking nearly all things sci-fi, superheroes, D&D, etc. She is continually thankful at how blessed her family is at this time, and always. Carina wanted to partake on this adventure to expand on her writing skills and touch on something she hasn't done since her early years of writing.]

“Sylvia, have you heard the news?” Mary asked after Sylvia’s mumbled hello.

Sylvia had to look at her phone again to see who was calling, “You woke me up. What time is it?” she answered, trying to be coherent.

Having been up for a while, getting ready for work, Mary hadn’t realized how early it was. Glancing at the clock, she offered, “Sorry I woke you. But we might need to change our plans. The college has shut down, and I am not going to work today. I don’t know when I will be going back.”

“Wait . . .What?!” Sylvia had no idea what was going on. “Slow down. Let me turn on the news.”

Mary waited for Sylvia to get on the same page. She could hear the morning news as they talked about COVID-19 and the, now, two cases being reported in the Valley. The newscaster was saying travel to infected areas were most likely to blame.

“Oh, wow. What does this mean?” Sylvia asked as the newscaster continued about possible business closures as more cases were diagnosed.

Mary had thoughts of being spontaneous, and as Sylvia said yesterday, getting the heck out of Dodge.

“I don’t know yet, but I think we should go to San Antonio now,” replied Mary. “I don’t think I want to be stuck in the Valley if this all goes crazy. I would rather be somewhere a little comfier.”

Mary was back to imagining lounging around a pool, sipping on a cool beverage, earbuds in, listening to her podcasts.

“I don’t think I can just get up and leave, Mary,” replied Sylvia, a little bothered by the thought. “I have to check on my work, check on my boyfriend, call my parents. I can’t exactly drop everything . There is too much to do.”

“Okay, okay,” Mary said with some impatience in her voice. “Let me know soon though. If

we are going together, I would like to leave today. Tomorrow morning at the latest.”

“Okay Mary, I will see what I can do,” and Sylvia hung up the phone.

Mary was disappointed Sylvia wasn't as eager as she to get out of the Valley, to get away for a little while, rather than waiting to see what COVID-19 was going to do.

Work had been cancelled indefinitely, with few things to be done remotely. Not much could be done off site when everything needed is in the office. She could do some menial stuff like check emails and maybe make some phone calls—which wouldn't take up a whole lot of time. So, although happy to have some time off, paid at that, she was soon bored without her normal daily routine.

She decided to have a quick breakfast, a smoothie, and get the morning paper from the porch.

That was a mistake.

All the news was on the 'virus' and what havoc it has been wreaking in other countries.

“Surely it can't get like this here,” she thought.

She breezed through the nonsense stuff before landing on the comics. She hoped to find something to smile and laugh at, a small reprieve from the dismal beginning of her day.

To get the fog out of her head, she decided to take a shower with her favorite 80's music blaring on the radio. She was going to go stir crazy if she didn't get her mind on something else. Without real work, she wasn't sure what to do with herself. By the end of her shower, she was more intent on getting on with her plans.

Mary continued with her strategy and tried to finish packing while listening to the news reports constantly breaking into the TV talk shows. She was rather annoyed the media felt they needed to update everyone every 15 minutes on where new cases were being found, what businesses were deciding to temporarily close, and what 'you could do to help stop the spread.'

She simply wanted to find a safe place-preferably by a pool with some wait staff-where she could relax and ride it out.

That was easier said than done because more people were testing positive during the morning hours. Not many were local, but the number of cases in Texas had begun to rise. Most cases were travel-related so far, making her feel there was little need to worry, but... yep, there was always that 'BUT.'

She couldn't get the thought out of her head; *“It could get worse.”*

Mary didn't want to crawl under a rock and hide. She felt she was given time to relax and wanted to make the most of it. That didn't mean being cooped up in her house as was being talked about on the news if numbers kept climbing.

She began to think she should just get in her car and go when the doorbell rang.