

## Wilderness House Literary Review 17/2

*Brittany Buchholz*

### **Things that Move in Waves**

THE VIRUS DRENCHED US IN WAVES. In January we'd eyed the approaching swell and wondered aloud to our husbands during the ten o'clock news, if the water might reach us? No, they reassured. China is different- a country with less equipment, less hygiene, less capacity. Things would be different in America. No- we worried too much. The media loved people like us.

March's quick surge soaked us. We shivered with bitterness that was the knowing we'd been right. But no matter. No time for matter. We strategized meticulously: masks for the children, groceries only once per week. Sarah didn't wear a mask- it infringed on her rights. She walked the isles, deserted of toilet paper and sanitizing wipes, and wondered what was wrong with people. We heard in April, that Sarah had caught it and recovered. We texted to see how she was- she of course was fine. It was nothing to worry about. People have lost their damn minds. Don't be a sheep. With summer, the water started to recede. It was serious, but with hope it would be gone by the holidays. Summer's sun incubated our hope.

Then, August's billow drowned it. Even our husbands now agreed, that the numbers were dire. We carried hand sanitizer as an accessory, scented alcohol such as rose, and cucumber. We messaged warnings to avoid Sue and Dave, who had just posted photos of their family vacation- a flight to Disney World. "So glad you had a good time. Yes- it certainly seems to have been blown out of proportion." Then we'd text each other, "What a thing to teach children- that their spinning teapots are worth more than others' lives."

Eventually, the computers stopped hugging back. We sat surrounded with our tech tools of connection- the laptops for Facebook and Zoom, ipads for reading, iphones for texting, iwatches for walking, earpods for listening. By September, it was boneyard of items to fill a day. We were haunted to remember how much we'd paid for each on Amazon, when all the while the news warns that the economy is sinking. We shouldn't have spent the money. We should have spent the money in a local business. We shared articles about spending money at local businesses, to even the karma. Gently, we declined the Zoom calls, afraid that somebody may ask how we are doing. Doing fine. Surely it's not as bad as they say. Have you heard the projections? Do you believe them?

We stopped breathing, dreading the crest which was in sight and two months out.

Lila sent out a text: "Dance party on zoom every day at noon. Three songs. Rain or shine. No talking. Just log in, dance three songs with us, and log out. I'll be there every day." A ripple.

"Seems bizarre," Karen texted to Sam and Maddie, and copy/pasted the link.

"If you're into this type of thing," Ashley mentioned to Carmen, and sent the invite.

We joined. And we tried to make the small talk, out of nervousness before dancing, but Lila muted us. Muted us! The audacity. Thank god.

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Lila pressed play on her playlist, then backed up a few paces from the screen. As the first chords hit, her eyes closed, and her ass started marking East and West- just the type of map our husbands would study for hours. We closed the office door.

It was horrifying, really.

"This is painful," Rory texted Fiona. They'd only logged in to witness the train wreck. They kept their videos off.

But then, Tori closed her eyes, too, and started to sway. Slowly at first, a side to side two step, but she had curly hair and the curls started bouncing, and it was just enough for Gertie, who was forty years older, to close her eyes too, and join in with some sort of solo, partner less waltz. It was sweet, to wonder about what had happened to her partner. Had there ever been a partner?

The courage fingered out, as things do- in waves. Soon, it was more unbearable to watch than it was to close our eyes and join, and so our videos clicked on as our toes left the sand, and we were floating. Twirling. Bouncing. (Literally- Rhonda was a fan of calorie burn and trampolines, and so pulled in her mini tramp to bounce along. Her tits gulped the unmasked freedom we'd all craved, not knowing how to seek.)

Day by day, week by week, the daily noon dance party with no words, only music, beat on. Some days, only one or two of us would show up. Most days, ten to twenty rocked together- hair flying, gyrating even. Unheralded the crest had arrived, and our pumping chests rose us to the sun. We had not sunk. We were the whitecaps.

We were saving ourselves.

We were saving each other.

The songs, turned to days, turned to weeks, and somehow months. After we'd prayed like this collectively for over sixteen hours, Lila broke the only rule: "no talking," for an announcement. We'd had our final dance party. She thanked us for our presence, and the zoom call ended. "Please be well. Don't stop dancing." Her square went dark.

Rory took up her phone, texting Fiona about the outfit Lila wore, on that last day. "You'd think she'd wear a more neutral bra, with a white shirt. Somebody should have told her."

Sam tried to revive it, starting her own zoom dance party link. Except- she added a conversation time, after the dancing. A time to network. To discuss. Nobody joined. Who has time for silly dancing, really?

"It was this daily dance party, with no talking. So bizarre," reflected Brielle to her sister, though she'd shimmied, thrashed, and pranced- all sixteen hours.