

## Wilderness Sarchild



### Feature

### Picture This

The traffic light  
The sidewalk  
The bright night  
The fire hydrant  
The trash bin  
The bus stop  
The concrete  
The white cop  
The other cops  
The black man  
He has a name:  
*George Perry Floyd*  
The bystanders  
The cameras  
The handcuffs  
The knee  
The breath  
The stop sign  
The no breath

### The One Thing I Can Count On For Sure Is Change

Yesterday I had a sense of wellbeing  
while I walked outside in the awakening  
spring warmth, talked with a masked friend  
at the edge of the pond, gathered together  
a group of postcard poets. Then, faster than  
a changing traffic light, unaccountable  
exhaustion set in. I phone surfed and  
ate pistachios to stay awake. Wellbeing  
slid off me like drizzle evaporates  
in parched desert air.

It's like that some days. I'm as susceptible  
to mood change as a toddler switching  
from giggles to a full-blown tantrum  
because she dropped her blueberry  
and the dog ate it.

I wake today to a new day  
worried that yesterday  
still locks me in its chains.  
I open my journal, pick up  
a pen, write until I am freed  
from yesterday's bondage  
-for the time being.

### **She Explains To Her Smart Phone Why She Won't Leave Her Husband**

Our not-so-secret affair began years ago.  
You're the first thing I hug upon waking,  
the last snuggle before bed.  
I hold your hand all day long.  
You patiently answer my questions:

*Will it rain fifteen days from now?  
How do I make a mask that will keep me alive at the grocery store?  
What is this diverticulitis that sent my son to the ER at 5 am?  
How do I get the rodents to stop nesting inside my car?*

In the morning when my husband wants to share  
his dreams from the night before or plan the day  
or make love, I hesitate to put you down But I do  
Because there are so many things you can't do:

*Rub your gentle hands through my long gray hair  
Flick your tongue over parts of my body that rise up like spring daffodils  
Wash all the dirty dishes in the sink  
Cook mac and cheese with green tomato relish  
Sing love songs to me on every birthday and sometimes on ordinary days  
Tell me you need me like seeds need rain*

### **One Day Something Will Get Me And Not Someone Else**

I wouldn't be here *if*  
my parents hadn't met  
in a coffee shop, *if*  
my mom hadn't asked  
my dad for a bite of his egg, *if*

I was born in Germany  
instead of the U.S., *if*  
I didn't get out of the street  
in time when I played  
chicken with my friends, *if*  
I was in the car with my friend  
Lisbeth when it careened  
off the mountain road, *if*  
I had been on the motorcycle with  
Lee when he met a truck head on, *if*  
the woman with the blue fingernails  
hadn't traded places with me  
on the whitewater raft, *if*  
my first husband's fist  
had hit its mark, *if*  
the rope had broken on the  
Colorado mountain, *if*  
I had been in my tent  
during the robbery, *if*  
like Eva, I had been diagnosed  
with stage four breast cancer

## Not Yet

=after Tony Hoagland's *Reasons To Survive November*

*"Do not go gentle into that good night...rage, rage against the dying of the light"* -Dylan Thomas

January like a tornado ☐  
a cancerous wind spins  
from Hell to Boston and wraps  
its spiked tendrils around you,  
twisting your body into a house of ruin.

Though the sky is a metal shield,  
you rise like a wildflower  
bursting through concrete,  
call your girlfriend, Maggie,  
get high together, pain slipping  
under the bed ☐ temporary respite.

It's Ballroom Night at the Milky Way. You have  
a closet filled with gold lamé and your bones yield  
to the call of familiar songs urging you to *waltz*  
under the disco light of impossible dreams.

The doctors think you're supposed to surrender:

become a fossilized belle of the ball  
with your medicines and nest of blonde hair,  
more lost each day, sallow skin  
ghost-like and pulled.

But like a stubborn toddler screaming  
to wear her pink chiffon tutu to church,  
your tantrum makes you strong.  
Knowing your insistence will dismay them,  
you paint your lips wolf moon red and you howl,  
fists raised as you *quickstep* on their platitudes.  
Your *p aso doble* is your middle finger.

□ And you insist on this one pleasure:  
a champagne toast to tornados  
which you sip at the Milky Way,  
cradled in your husband's arms,  
swaying under the florescent plastic stars,  
not a minute to lose.

**Wilderness Sarchild** is an award winning poet and playwright. She is the author of a full length poetry collection, *Old Women Talking*, published by *Passager Books*, and the co-author of *Wrinkles, the Musical*, a play about women and aging. She has won awards for her poetry and play writing from Veterans for Peace, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Chicago's Side Project Theatre Company, and the Joe Gouveia WOMR National Poetry competition, judged by Marge Piercy. She has been featured as Poet of the Week on Poetry Superhighway, Poet of the Month at the Brewster Ladies Library, and can be heard reading her poetry on WCAI Poetry Sunday. Her poems have been published in numerous anthologies and literary journals. Wilderness is also an expressive arts psychotherapist and grandmother of six. She is a social justice activist and is a consultant/teacher of skills in conflict resolution, consensus decision making, mediation, meeting facilitation, and empowered aging. Wilderness lives in a cottage in the woods in Brewster, MA, with her husband, poet Chuck Madansky. They are surrounded by wild neighbors that include turkeys, coyote, fox, deer, squirrels, giant snapping turtles, and birds.