

Wilderness Sarchild -- Two Poems

I Miss My Friend

Isabel turns 78 this month
She keeps losing my phone number

She stores empty cat food cans in her oven
To keep the smell out of her garbage

When I worry she'll turn it on
She assures me she doesn't cook anymore

But I see a burn spot on the ceiling above her stove
And the kitchen has a rotted meat smell

She taught me to take a stand and speak my truth
Now she has trouble standing or speaking about anything

From radical young feminists to raging grannies
We marched, practiced civil disobedience, got arrested

Dragged by cops into the caged van
We sang, "We Shall Overcome"

She was always angry
For good reason

Now, sitting home with her cats
She is always happy

I miss her discontent

Origin Story Of Many Layers

I'm relieved that I don't have
to return there anymore
(except in this poem)

Where Union Carbide and Dupont
dumped their chemicals
into the noxious river
and our parents made sure

we had our tetanus shots
before allowing us to dive off
their motorboats where
sunlight never stole through
the smog until afternoon
and where my father
chopped down the walnut tree
mowed down the rhubarb
because we were modern
and could acquire everything
we needed at the Piggly Wiggly.

Where, when we were 12,
Jack Burdett wrestled
me to the soggy ground,
smell of rotting river,
to tear through
my five layers of t-shirts.
Five layers because
he had warned me
the day before
he was “gonna get me good”
and I knew what he meant.
He was only able to grab and pull
through two layers. Then we
got up off the ground,
huffing and puffing,
an unspoken truce,
when his father whistled
him home for dinner.

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 that will go into its third season of production in the fall of 2019. 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 was recently selected as Poet of the Week on Poetry Superhighway. Her poems have been published in numerous anthologies and literary journals. 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.