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How to Sing for Money

poems

Connie Wanek

In her new collection, poet Connie Wanek reflects on the recent death of her mother, continues the series of Mrs. God poems that enlivened her previous collection, *Consider the Lilies*, and ensnares us in the kind of whimsical meandering the deeper significance of which often strikes us only after the fact. In “Tennis Lessons,” for example, she relates the various instructions being given by the “pro,” many of which—“Relax,” “Don’t Think,” “Remove imperfections”—could easily carry a deeper meaning. The poem arrives at a hilarious conclusion: “Ideally, after the lesson I could be someone else altogether.”

In another poem an old friend appears in the poet’s dreams to tell her she’s started smoking again—something she hadn’t dared to do when she was alive. Wanek shares her mother’s advice about medicine—you could tell how well it was working by how much it hurt. There are gentle words, too, about her father, a soldier in his youth, who chose to be buried in a distant cemetery with his comrades rather than close to home, near his family. Well, it was free.

Along with the rich detail and understated humor, there’s a subtlety and ease in these lines that’s rare. Wanek is confident that we’ll catch her drift.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Connie Wanek has lived in New Mexico and Minnesota. For a quarter century she lived in Duluth near Lake Superior, where she worked at the Duluth Public Library and restored old houses. She has two children and two grandchildren. Her most recent books are *Rival Gardens: New and Selected Poems* from the University of Nebraska Press, *Consider the Lilies: the Mrs. God poems*, and a book of poetry for young readers, *Marshmallow Clouds*, co-written with Ted Kooser and published by Candlewick Books, which won the CLiPPA Award in the UK.

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