

Poetry Series

Wanda Swim Strunk
- poems -

Publication Date:
2009

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Wanda Swim Strunk()

Wanda Swim Strunk is a native Iowan whose works have appeared in literary magazines and the Poem ' I wanted to be a Willow Tree' was winner of the coveted Mississippi Valley Poetry contest's Mississippi Valley category and her most known poem ' August is the dying month' first appeared here on poemhunter. Her works have been chosen by Harvard's foreign students as poems of the month and she has had her work added to educational curriculums from Iowa to India. Her work has inspired other artists like Gustav Reyes beautiful wood rings. She currently resides in Iowa and is working on a book of short stories about love and romance later in life called 'The Coffin Dodgers'.

20 Versions Of Tomorrow

20 versions of tomorrow
Play out in my head

Tail lights and Street lights
Sprinkle the sky with electronic rubies

Leafless trees upstretch their branches
Like arms in hallelujah to God above

20 Conversions I'll have tomorrow
Play over in my head

Shiney onyx rain washed roads
Lay out before me like licorice ropes

Water under moving tires crackle like bacon
The passenger seat void except radio blather

20 Versions of tomorrow
All possible, none probable

My blinker is clicking in time
With the anxious beats in my chest

I turn left into my driveway
No time left for today

Just the 20 versions of tomorrow
And what lies for me ahead

Wanda Swim Strunk

39

The sky and clouds in reverse
Looks like
Islands floating in the blue sea
Out for a drive
I realize
I am 39

Endlessly the road stretches out in front of me
Looks like
Thin dime store taffy with its white stripe down the middle
Its lifetime will be longer than mine
I understand
I am 39

The daylight fights the oncoming dusk
Looks like
A fluorescent pink marker alighted marks the day from night sky
A fantastic divide of the day's hours
I recognize
I am 39

I drive on enveloped in shiny hard metal with stainless steel handles
Looks like
Without wheels and windows it would be as encasing as a coffin
Leather seats will someday be replaced with silky satin
I know
I am 39

I stop my journey when I reach my home
Looks like
A memory chest with doors and dormers full of my lifetime's moments
Paradise exists in my finest recollections
I resign
I am 39

Wanda Swim Strunk

A New Voice Escapes Me

A new Voice escapes me
Speaking phrases I formerly wouldn't acknowledge
For fear of change
Or allegation
I replaced 5-petal niceties with truthful dirty flowers
Who decides which is appealing?
Prettier?
More precious?

I do
Not you

A new mindset over takes me
My brain opens at the middle
Split in half like a peach
To get to my pit
This formerly seemed useless
When I wanted instant sweetness for my mouth
Temporary hungers needed to subside
That pit could bring me
All the sustenance needed for a lifetime
If I take the time to sow and nurture it
I thought I didn't like peaches
Who decides what I like?

I do
Not you

I am my own cultivation
In this handed down civilization
A gardener in the garden of me
I decide what stays
What will be my planted seeds
You tend to you
I'll tend to me
Then who will decide what my flowers are
And what are my weeds.

Not you

me

Wanda Swim Strunk

American Geisha

Have you ever been a piece of ass?
Eyes, hands, tongues wanting to experience your house of flesh
Pushing so hard on the outside
That it bruised your soul inside?
Did it teach you to make thicker walls?
People called you fat.

I am asking, have you?

Have you ever been so starving poor
Working 4 jobs just to hang to the side of the lifeboat
Caught the eye of a rich man
With pockets full of possessions but vacant everywhere else
Offering you his world of stipulations
Have you ever turned that down?
People called you a fool.

I am asking, have you?

Have you had a man give up loving you
Not because he didn't love you but because he didn't know how?
In that moment did you find yourself or lose yourself?
What didn't kill you did it make you stronger?
Resent it because strength wasn't what you needed
You needed what had been killed.
People called you unreasonable to expect more.

I am asking, have you?

Have your painted lips ever held their tongue
Have you smiled when your heartbreaker said hello
Looked down from the high road to those on their high horse
Thinking American girls have their form of Geisha too.
We smile pretty into lusting eyes and rusty desires
While listening to a broken record of what is required
For people to call you a cultivated lady of strength.

I am asking because I have.

Wanda Swim Strunk

August Is The Dying Month

August is the dying month
When hot July struggles to keep her hold
Moving toward a hopeless chilled September
Pretending to be summer
As if children heading back to school stir the cold from the sky

It is a refined deceiver

August is a butterfly crushed on a roadway
One side dead to the pavement
The other is still vibrantly flutteringly alive
Fighting to fly away but it's fate is already sealed

It is a delicate executioner

August is the month colors trickle from trees
A first leaf unnoticed tumbles
Sheepishly the others will shortly follow
Shamefully they will drift to the ground

It is a subtle destroyer

August is 6 PM
The disillusion of a day realized
Dinners to be eaten alone
Murky dark mixes with the daylight
Spitting out gloomy gray

It is a sophisticated betrayer

August is the death rattle
Demise by means of a Fall
Stealing gaped mouth last breaths
Swallowing everything into its earth
Coughing back a cold winter in return.

Wanda Swim Strunk

Bitter As An Unripe Orange

Bitter as an unripe orange
Orange you glad you asked

Asked a question so divine
Divine became my task

Task became toil for hire
Hire was a root beer drink

Drink in the tragic sight
Sight is all in how it's seen

Seen it all in my time
Time became my reluctant friend

Friend not won but made
Made a den to burrow in

In me lies the bitter orange
Orange you glad you asked

Wanda Swim Strunk

Clocks

All the clocks in my life are set to different times
I am unsure if that is an excuse or an explanation
Unable to handle the hands of time

Now that I watch the watch
My former wrists of youth that wore the hours and minutes
like shackles

Cursing the world to hurry up and keep pace
Youth is Illusion of smoke and mirrors
Pretty wrapping around an empty box

The best chapter of a good book
Is when only a few pages are left
Leaving the desire for a sequel

Wanda Swim Strunk

Come Back Kid

Dance the dance steps
From when I was small
I just remembered
I didn't dance at all
Partly sunny Cloudy outside
A terrifying terrific ride
Diminutive diminished
Left larger than Life
Cut me with a knife
Pare away the extra heft
To find just a breeze left
Light the flames
From when I was small
To find I wasn't so hot after all
Aperitif appetite
Tongues delight
To see
What may have become of me
I see wide open spaces
In My hand
All of the aces

Wanda Swim Strunk

Creep

You asked me if I heard what you just said
Yes, it was something about you leaving
And all the things outside our bed.

I am going down my father's path
Blind to all I should see
You sound like my mother's wrath
I am a creep and I've crept in between you and me.

Yeah I heard what you alleged
Memorized from the million times said before
It all swims around in my head
Threatened but you haven't gone out the door.

What motivates me to do better
The woman I have the potential to be
Never a winner always a quitter
I am a creep and I've crept in between you and me.

I am the in betweener
The never be-er
Under achiever

Yeah I heard what you alleged
Memorized from the million times said before
It swims around my head
Still threatening but not out the door.

Wanda Swim Strunk

Dirty Kurty

He looks to get high
In the lowest of low places
His world swirls
To a mangled mess
Lighting foil
To burn his midnight oil

I get glimpses
Before the high takes flight
Vanishing the man I once knew

He's lost to me
He's lost to you

His charm is a device
To make me think he's alright
Into thinking I might be wrong
To question my reason
Allowing myself to be seduced
By his cheap song

I get glimpses
Glimmer-y shimmer-y Sparkles
Of who he used to be

He's lost to you
He's lost to me

He wastes his genius
On barstool fools and addicts
His self-inflicted dementia
My heart becomes conflicted
It's hard to look his mother in the eye
And Lie

I get glimpses
I can see remnants of the man
In his worn thin skeleton suit

He lost to me
He's lost to you

I want to believe his words
I want to hear his song
I want to think he can pull thru
But those things I want
Are just wishes gone wrong

In my mind is a picture
Of him playing guitar and smiling
But behind that beautiful grin are false teeth

He's lost to you
He's lost to me

Wanda Swim Strunk

Electric Van Gogh

Ties are a noose
When pulled tight
Can strangle someone silent
Unless they are the strong and silent type
Collars of black and white
Like a chastity ring
Meant to close down the throat
Unless they are secretly deep throated
Badges of valor
Lack Lipstick rings
Double digit down fall
On an Upswing
Zippers are a chained link fence
To keep the dog in
Howdy neighbor
Frankenstein-ed into suspicious routines
Out the rear window
Space invaders in the living room
Leak in thru black umbilical cords
Electric Van Gogh
Brings to life a picture
No one in their left mind would paint

Wanda Swim Strunk

Human Suitcase

you made My bones
Flesh and skin
you and him
A human suitcase
To put your baggage in
Lay your trip out before Me
Claim at times to adore Me
Yet I am the who unconditional loves
Heart worn on my sleeve
your Mouth wears boxing gloves
your full of conditions
Words that manipulate
Full of drama
mama
Making inside Me palpitate
you couldn't have left Me anymore
Alone as a child
Could you leave me alone now
Find some compassion to
Some how
I carry you within me
Even without you
you don't need to add more
Beaten outside and full In
The Human suitcase
you put your baggage in

Wanda Swim Strunk

I Am Holding Your Eyes Hostage

I am
Holding your eyes
Hostage
But
Your Mind
is free
to
wander

Wanda Swim Strunk

I Am Quitting My Job My Friend

I am quitting my job, my friend
This is real not pretend
My means now becoming the means that will end

I fully endorse
Putting the apple cart before the horse
And throwing caution to the wind ofcourse

Is there a difference between excited or frightened
Both caused by senses being heightened
Am I absolutely depressed or completely enlightened?

I am rolling the dice my friend
The eighter from Decatur can't stop where I spin
Or where my rubber meets the road or where it will end

Off with conventions
And the road to hell paved with intentions
I fear there is no prevention

I am moving at mach speed
No more spinning my wheels or unseen scenes
I am free, I am free, I am free

Wanda Swim Strunk

I Had The Most Beautiful Dream Of You.

I had the most beautiful dream of you
You were holding me
I was crying
You whispered calming things in my ear
You stroked my hair
Not as lovers
Or as a man wanting to be a hero to a woman
But the recognition of a soul
Set out in the lonely world
To find shared comfort

Wanda Swim Strunk

I Lack A Feeling

I lack a feeling
I empty out words
Curt to everyone I see these days
Careless as no one much matters

I need a sentiment
Instead of trying to be a clever I lack
Like a Beatles Rum Raisin hullabaloo
On malcontent Marmalade skies

I desire a sensation
Not some two-fingered revolutions
On a lonesome afternoon
A worn out pacifier

I require an emotion
Of some sort, sometime, somewhere
I can take a boot to the shins
Without being aware of it

What is with me?
More than that what isn't with me?

Something further than a bell jar
That can be shattered
A disappointing enchantment
I have become

The invitations are dead letters
Deader than the sea scrolls
My own genius is in genuine
Like an un-amusing muse

Wanda Swim Strunk

I Wanted To Be A Willow Tree

Tangled in the loving slender arms
I would knot the ends
To make a swing
Under my willow tree

It sat next to an old farmhouse
Deserted since the depression
Along the banks of
The Wapsipinicon

Untamed grandeur
During a storm
I climbed into her knotty divide
The tree held me
Like a mother cuddling me to her breast

I wanted to be that willow tree
Its soulful sway
The ability to stand firm
Throughout the worst
Give comfort to anyone seeking it

Someone took an ax
To my willow tree
As if a nuisance
Without regard
For all it endured

Barrenness now resides
Where life once lived
My beautiful tree
I weep for it
Because it wept for me

Wanda Swim Strunk

If You Were Metal

If you were metal
You would be copper.
Shiny and malleable
And made into useful things
Like pots and pans
And fish shaped molds
That hang on kitchen walls

If I was metal
I would be gold
Dirty gold long forgotten at the bottom of a jewelry box
A necklace you took for a noose
I am unrealized gold
I lay waiting
for someone to polished me up then
they would have something

And she?
She is silver
Silver that could have been a sterling fork used at fancy dinner parties
Instead
She is cheap
Maybe a ring or bracelet sold at a flea market
She looks like something that should be good
But she is just an imitation of her wishes.

Wanda Swim Strunk

In The Intimate Hours Of The Morning

In the intimate hours of the morning
I feel you snuggle in to me
I bury my nose in your hair
Breathing in deep your scent
Hoping to make it last inside me

I listen to you breathing
And feel the softness of you
I can't believe you are mine
We knew in an instant that we were each other's love affair
You have comforted me
Delighted me
Stretched the tether of our connection
But we never broke

In the intimate hours of the morning
I smell your hair
And whisper
Please dont die

Wanda Swim Strunk

It Is A War So Far Away

It is a war so far away
It seems like another TV Show for the fall line up
For a moment feelings come about
When a picture of flagged draped coffin
Or a bandaged child is within view
But as soon as the newspaper closes
Or the Tv shuts off
So do the feelings
Minds wander back to the banal
Childrens sports schedules
Dry cleaning pick up
Lawn care
To the soldier
To the orphan
To the right fighter
Their worlds are blown up
Their innocence blown away
And constantly in their faces
In their minds for life
Bombs do not echo around the world
Huge conflicts simply become history to argue
Lives lost become statistics
What was the point of the war again?

Wanda Swim Strunk

Jigsaw

Pieces of Life
Ride on a zephyr

Parts of Life
On a wind

As Occular Sinister
As a left eye can be

Both are the same thing
No matter how it's put

Waves of sorrow
Just begun

The sickness
Of nervous twisting

A tornado swallowed
Swirling inside

No tangible remains
Memories kept in mind only

Everything seems lost
Ingested into the unknown

Hope rides a wave
Of unseen possibility

Undesired freedom
A new life not yet imagined

Is all lost
When true self is found?

Wanda Swim Strunk

Let There Be Light And There Was

Eve offered to Adam an Apple
He wasn't forced to take it
Was the result so bad
Seeing paradise, naked?

Wanda Swim Strunk

Light Bulb Over His Head

What if Edison
Had been on medicine
Instead of Obsessively Compulsively
Working Day and Night
We would still be in the dark
No one would see the light

Wanda Swim Strunk

Media Mediocrity

Media Mediocrity
Castigation abounds

Temperamental Masses amass
A messy message

Ready made and waiting

Warhol's blank stare
15 minutes is a blink of his eye

Everyone's path is Plath
Today's new follows the dead

We live in and by dead people's thoughts

Out of context
No Virtues

People speak like Charlie Brown's teacher

The vehicle of vernacular
Rides over a hodgepodge horizon

Engaging in corporal touch when
Escaping the cultural landscape

Switch off instead of switching ourselves

Wanda Swim Strunk

Mother Of Pearl

We are two women
Nothing alike
Mother and daughter
In a constant fight

I asked why did she even have me

She sat me down and said:
I wished you into existence
A Woman nothing like myself
Who I always wanted to be

I am like an oyster
Ugly at times with many a flaw
But deep inside I kept the best of me
A creation of awe

You would be perfection
Though an irritation at times
But I polished up my best of me
Into ball that would shine

In order for the world to see
The part I kept hidden, the best of me
You would have to be cut right out of my heart
To set your beauty free

I grow older
My life coming to it's end
To the world
I send out my most precious gem

The answer is simple
Why I brought you into this world
I am an Oyster
And you are my Pearl

Wanda Swim Strunk

Mothers Passed

I cant see her dying
Envisoning it, you know
My mother
that is

Yet I watched my mother in law die
in only a few short days
Up and talking as normal as you and I
Then suddenly in throws of the death rattle
but she could hear and would occasionally faintly laugh
At what we spoke about
As we watched her die
But you could feel the love so thick in the room
it could be sliced out of the air
And served like cake on a plate

I saw that life was a delicate as a butterfly wings
And if we touch it
The color will rub off on us all
The beautiful colorful dust
That is life

Wanda Swim Strunk

My Lovely Liza

She wears black velvet all year long
Always has her white boots on
I will let her tell me she is right
When I know she is wrong

My Lovely Liza

Her sells every day destiny as new
Her terms are scarcely true
She'll say the world is coming unglued
Then declare she doesn't know what to do

My Lovely Liza

Her immense green eyes possess mine
Her words are hardly words kind
Then she sings my song line for line
She breaks my heart every time

My Lovely Liza

She wears black velvet all year long
Always has white boots on
I wonder why I choose to hold on
I know in a moment she'll be gone

My Lovely, Lovely Liza

Wanda Swim Strunk

New York Sucks

New York sucked me into its pavement
Until I became gray and stony too
With it's constant humming background
Irritating and hypnotic like a Hoover vacuum
Began feeling less like me and more like living scenery
I could move without moving anyone to me
Clustered in I couldn't get them to move away

I couldn't get any space to breathe and I was so fucking lonely
I couldn't recognize a "me" in any crowd
I know which fork to use
But all I heard is you're eating European backwards
Failing to ask if I was left handed
Everyone is edgy hip and hyped up
Turning my type Q personality into an A as well.
Curt talk from store clerks while I bought their overpriced noodles
And they acted like they were doing me a favor
Maybe they did

I left the sour apple
One less worm I suppose
Fresh air and space to move
You know why Midwest people are bigger, taller?
Because we have the room to be
No cramping in, no sardine-ry
Maybe the growing weeds are really prairie flowers
But New York won't admit to that
If it's the greatest city in the world
Why the hard sell

Wanda Swim Strunk

Perils Of Pearls

Old broken words in spineless protection
At best
Is dimly Lit

Audience remains
Un-entertained
By elderly expressions that linger
Stuck to a page
Failing to age like fine wine

Unable to follow Yeats lead
Or like the gist of
Not the tedium that is Shakespeare

Contemporary Constituents
Live on tried and true expressions
When fresh words are all around
To be understood by the subsequent generation

Those in charge of the wordy world
Blinded by advanced degrees
Unable to see
A Charles Chaim Wax
A Jake Hassler
A Mary Nagy
In their time

Egotistic Language lords
Spin silk
From a sow's ear
Eager that with ears taken
Eyes wont open to the fact
They want the swine to think its pearls

Apparently
Snobs with caviar lipstick
Only truly know what is art

Numb audience

Dumbly decide
To what is seen and heard
The genuine cant be seen by the unauthentic
Too busy stringing their cultured pearls on fools gold thread

Wanda Swim Strunk

Popping The Question

Did you marry me because I was a sure thing but now you're not so sure?

Are you drowning in a bottle looking for a cure?

Are you clear about me
I am aware what you see
That I am unable to live my ever after... happily

Is that your wedding ring or a noose around your heart?

When did the loving stop and the fighting start?

I feel small but don't call me a shrink

Keep baptizing your soul with a drink

I am what ails me
You have no choice but to fail me
I am born to live my ever after...unhappily

When you popped the question you started the trouble

Are you surprised that my sadness is bursting your bubble?

I am a misery to myself and to you

I can't leave because I am destined to carry this through

Who said soul mates can't be bad for each other?
Co dependant on one another
It's our destiny
To live our lives together ever after...unhappily

Wanda Swim Strunk

Pretty Girl In A Shitty Car

Pretty Girl in a shitty car
Headliner hanging
Tailpipe dragging

Beauty Queen of broken dreams
Had the world on string

Or so it seemed

Growing up pretty
Doesn't create pity
It creates a single road

No one informed you

That a good life is earned
Not owed

Needed to be a Mrs
Afraid to be missed

You gave your only quality
Didn't think you had a mind to share
But your pretty self alone
Couldn't keep "him" there.

Made babies born with a Job
Mixing "him" and Pretty you
Instead of fulfilling your purpose
The babies became discarded trash too.

Pretty Girl now a waitress
Cleaning up other peoples messes
Cant clean up your own

Feet hurt
Ass hanging out of a small skirt
Get in your shitty car
Hoping it will start

Hoping you still have a home

Wanda Swim Strunk

Quietly You Go

Quietly you go
Soft angel feathers
Envelope your soul
Carrying you away from us
We are left to piece together why we stay
And why you had to go

Softly you take leave
As your soul ascends
All pain trickles to earth
Shed back to us in the form of rain and snowflakes
We remember our loved one and friend

Gently you disappear
When our minds pass too
So shall the memory of you
Tender quiet soul
I hope that with you someday
I will quietly go

Wanda Swim Strunk

Quotes From Childhood

Daddy wouldn't do that he loves you
Mommy's tired
Clean it up yourself
When you leave this house you represent our family
I loves you kids
Come on hotrods
I only breed champions
God gave me you to make me laugh
Use your head save your feet
It only costs a dollar more to go first class
I am going to tan your ass so hard your shirt is going to roll up your back like a window shade
I know you're the one who will take care of me in my old age
I ran into a wall
My parents must have had an emergency
No, that's not my dad
I love my parents
You could have had it worse
I brought you into this world I can take you out
Please don't tell
We have to work how else do the bills get paid
That isn't a very nice thing to say to your own mother
I had a hard life too you know
I was an abused child too
Things weren't this nice when I was growing up

Wanda Swim Strunk

Silence So Loud

I am cluttered today by the cacophony that is life
My eyes powerless to focus on my work
Wandering to the periphery
The piles of paper and pens
Post it pads
All waiting for their turn
Screaming into my eyes they have been ignored long enough
Crying "we live in chaos! "
Every one of them
Foot stomping tantrum throwers
I want to stick my fingers in ears
Do the bugs and birds also hear that soundless wail?
So that a million of them have joined in chorus
Aiding my paper clips and unanswered mail?
My ears and eyes fill with a silence so loud
Worse noise than experienced at a busy intersection
Surrounded by several cars all playing the drivers favorite song
At full blast
Twang to the left
Glass vibrating bass to the right
Stop it all!
I am overwhelmed today!
I am afraid to close my eyes and shut it out
Inside my head
Always there
Are the jingle jangle thoughts
Sometimes louder than my papers

Wanda Swim Strunk

Some Guitarists I Know

Casey hides behind an Elvis swagger
And a marlboro red
He's small and charming
He has a smile that is velvet
He wants to live in a comic book
When he sings
Emotion hangs on his guitar strings

And He plays beautiful guitar

Green likes the blues
Johnny Lang, Stevie Ray
He has the style of Bruce Willis
Charms the pants off of most women
Sometimes he wants to be in love
But wonders why he cant love them
Like Jade and his mom

And He plays beautiful guitar

Dirty Kurt
Tall and lanky
Can write an enviable lyric in a second
Manipulates strings that makes girls weep
He has hearts in his eyes
Because He's in love with love
He has a radiant smile but his teeth are fake

And He plays beautiful guitar

John is solid as cement
Tall and expansive with big shoulders
With a big voice to match
Writes simple lyrics with complexity
He loves Iggy and the Stooges
And Mike Watt, Captain Sensible
John Lennon, Frank Black
Sometimes Eno

And He plays beautiful guitar

Wanda Swim Strunk

Sunflowers Swim To Mars

What's on your mind
Is invading mine
Words hide inside
Skipping my lips and finger tips
Leaves me ill-equipped
The wonder of it all, wonderwall
Red as the fourth planet
Snakes for shoelaces
Tie me to the ground
Tickle me inside
Topple my issues
Search my vinyl
Un-simple reminder
Little girl in a big man's world
Tucked inside a better-stay-put box
Gratitude with attitude
Fire by trial
Don't get dirty
Just look pretty
Off with a wink and a smile

Wanda Swim Strunk

Take A Ride On Reading

I find myself in familiar territory
Three days in
And I'm a slumlord again.
With my red hotels
And invisible bums

Those focused on Boardwalk
Forget what happens if they land on Mediterranean
With Hotels

The railroads are mine
The Lights and water too
No new developments

No little top hat man can help you now
Because I have his top hat
Soon I'll have your shirt

Your fancy silver car gets you around
But I have been around the block a few times too
I've rolled the dice
I coveted and finagled your Marvins Gardens
I won a beauty contest
While hoarding get out of jail free cards

Wanda Swim Strunk

The Goddess Of Echoes

I trapped myself in things
The doing of my undoing
Unraveling
The ties I have had
Family ties
Work ties
Stomach tied in knots

I buried myself in things
The longing in my belonging
Unveiling
The lies I have told
Stupid lies
Hurtful lies
Half truths that lie within me

Sometimes I lie to let the false hood float about the air
But always confess a moment later
Silently to myself
I am the goddess of Echoes

Wanda Swim Strunk

The Intention Is Yes

I may look like I'm in the no
But the intention is yes

Lips that seal
Eyes that peel

Simplest of yes
Positively so

Hands that shake
Pockets that take

The purpose is yes
Wonders to know

Arms that share
Terms that care

Quietly yes
Whispers in an ear

Quietly yes
Whispers in an ear

Quietly yes
Whispers in an ear

Wanda Swim Strunk

The Ladder

It was one thing to be born
The lowest rung of the ladder
It was another to go out
Acquire the skills
Buy the materials
Build the ladder
Then start the climb

I felt like this
No Horatio Alger was I
With caring do-gooders
Helping me climb up the steps easier

Others went well on their way
Me still struggling with
My rickety half ass ladder
All I could afford

Hating it.
Wondering if it would hold.
Busy shifting around

Why did I ever construct this ladder?
When my feet were firmly planted on the ground to begin with
What did I want to see after I made it to the peak?

I know now.

I built it
To see beyond it

Wanda Swim Strunk

The Magnificent Blueprint

I breathe air comprised of dead people's breaths

Used before me by those who came before me

I wear a quilt of cellular makeup of inherited DNA

I see through borrowed eyes

That over time have become more accurate but less acute

I was born of chance by two but designed by hundreds

Forced into this rented map of history encapsulated in a body

Childless, I do not get to see what piece of me they would get

Like my niece and I who got my mother's mother's hands

I will die with resignation that I, me, myself will just be dust

In a round about way I will live on

Through great nephews and nieces

Who will breathe in my used air

On gloomy days wondering where it all began

Writing poems with pens held in loaned hands

Wanda Swim Strunk

The Squandered Penny

There is a shiny penny in my hand
To be spent how I would like
So many choices
So much to see
Beckoning my shiny penny and me

Polished to perfection
It glows like the new day sun
So much brilliance
So much light
I hold on to my penny very tight

The days is passing
I am aware of the time
So many decisions
So many roads to try
Slowly my penny begins to oxidize

The moon turns into the rusted sun
Reminding that I have spent my day
Was it squandered in fear
Or on a path so clear
Should I have given my penny away?

Wanda Swim Strunk

The Tarnished Princess

She walks with envy
Thinking everyone has more than she does
So she lies and steals
Manipulates situations to her advantage
She doesn't understand
That she could truly have it all
If she would just be truthful
With herself
About others
She takes pieces of other women
That she thinks is sexy
And imitates them
Burying herself
Under other women's mannerisms and jokes
That's how a fat girl
Who doesn't have a date to the prom
Becomes prom queen
She takes a grain of truth and wraps it in a lie
Sends it around the world
On poison tongue sails
And ill wind
She sells off her integrity
And wonders why
No one stays in her life but for moments
Everything feels unreal
She is betrayed by people
Live by the gun
Die by the gun

Wanda Swim Strunk

To The Wandas Of The World

To the Wandas of the World
Our name conjures up Images
Of ketchup on macaroni & cheese
Potato Chips in Tupperware Bowls
On picnic tables
On redwood Decks
Of trailer parks
In Arkansas

To The Wicked Wandas
With Wall street whipped
Dirty Vixen hell cats
Vinyl and leather to be unzipped
In pointy Bras
On Pulp magazines
Our eyes covered
with an ink rectangle

To the Wandas Ive met
Proud sister in Purple lipstick
Southern belles
I am your North Star
Representing the potato chips
Crushed in between
2 pieces of Wonder bread
with Bologna
with mayonaise
And a slice of processed cheese food

Wanda Swim Strunk

Today I Am Thinking Of My Father

The sky is overcast and dreary
The temperature dropped 40 degrees
Like grey lint it's come to invade my lungs
I cant breathe and begin to cough

Today I am thinking of my father

I see a life worn drunk at the local diner
Giving the dirty eye to the foreign owners
While he smokes his cigarette
Ponytail, pock marked skin, dirty sweats

I am thinking of a man who might have been

I am sitting at a bar with endless chatter
I am silent except for my mindfull clamor
I drink in the words but register none
I drink to make others more interesting

I think of the cast off shell of someone gone

I am soaking in the bathtub
The water so hot I am red where it touches
Like the skin of a swatted bottom
My head bobbing barely above water

Tonight I am thinking of my father

Wanda Swim Strunk

Walking Pneumonia

Battery acid fingers
Burn at the touch
I walk and whisper
I have no voice

Driving on Roller coaster hills
Once Stalked by corn
Grant Wood trees
Used to Bubble up from the ground
Like lava pools
The trees have lost their leaves
The spiny spindly branches
Aren't going to stop the disease
In the breeze

Cinder block building
Non descript
For a prescription
And to look at the American Flag
Outside a building full of foreigners
And foreign made objects

Here we go round in circles
Round round circles
Versus Godzilla
Versus MothMan
Or the Gila Monster
It's low grade

Disorderly fashion
Objects lose their meaning
Becoming bits of background color
I have to get over this cold
And off the codeine

Drive back home
Like Grant Woods death on ridge road

Climb under for a clammy sweat

Breathing like a fish out of water
Eyes staring at the wall
I think I see the virgin Mary in the designs of the plaster
Could I chip that out to sell on ebay
To meet the expense of my Dr bills?

I am coughing like my Grandmother Hoffmann
Her cough made me think why go on living
If you just cough and watch soap operas

I melt into my marshmallow mattress
Cry hot cheek streaking tears
I turn on soap operas
Coughing while I go on living

Wanda Swim Strunk

Who Stuck Me In A Snow Globe

Who stuck me in a snow globe
Who gave it a shake
I feel as lonely as a raindrop
Now frozen and a flake

Wintery wonders snowy down
Soon to be plowed
I feel as futile an ice chunk in my tire well
Not letting my wheels go round

Wanda Swim Strunk

Why Did You Kiss Me?

Who are you to kiss my lips
Unannounced
Without request
Stir up Kansas sized tornadoes
Within a sentimental prison
That has no bars
What ties and binds us
Is invisible
What I am not sure about
Is why
If you speak it
Does it have to become acknowledged
Why have you taken the time
To watch me and figure me out
Dominate me
Treating me like a wife
What in my story do you want me to reveal
An earthquake versus a tornado
Is never a good thing
Across a field I breathe your wind
If you touch down I would consume you
Then we would own each other's souls
And what would that get us?

Wanda Swim Strunk

Winter Heralds In

Winter heralds In a level of depression
That surpasses
The level of elation
I feel when spring arrives

I accept that poets and predictions
Cant stop the worlds afflictions
That have been there
Since the dawn of time

Still I look to strength
Between God and booze
Only to realize
They are empty methods too

So I sit here and write
In the half dark
Of the coming night
Wondering what to do

Fully Knowing
That Winter heralds in
My depression like a treacherous friend
The creative muse by which I write

Wanda Swim Strunk

Words Somersault Toward My Ears

Words somersault toward my ears
On a serpentine chain
Causing a soul quake
Mistook for heart ache

Broken in likelihood of possibility

Thoughts glide around my head
On gray pigeon wings
Both innocent and wise
Having lived a 100 lives

Heard more clever views in lesser moments

Feelings plummet headed for my feet
On a rocket launched missile
Dismissed in disgrace
Twisted in distaste

Something once grand now tarnished

Emotions assemble under my skin
On the tap shoes of a dancer
Low self esteem remarks
High quality restarts

Ever so slight a little shift a riot sparks

Wanda Swim Strunk

Working In The Old Wilson Building On New Spring Day

Rainwater bounces off the window glass
Sounding as if a million pebbles are being thrown at
The old Wilson Building
Housing this working lass

Thunder first rumbles
Into a loud atmospheric shake
Then winds down to the slightest of grumbles
A thunder can make

Appearing as if the sky is shouting
Wake up land from your winter nap
The ground hides under it's cover
Who likes to be shouted at?

Rain washes the structure's aged bricks anew
A flicker of its youth shines through
But the building is stuck where it is at
What else can a building do?

Alone in the old Wilson building on a new spring day
Housed in a crumbling monument to yesterday
Resisting the urge to run away

I am stuck *tick* tick* typing on my own
Wishing to leave but not go home
Inclined to distraction and letting my mind roam

Encapsulating stifling building made of strong brick on sturdy ground
Has nothing to fear when rain and thunder are around
But wind; now that's a different story all around
Wind can blow this whole world down

Wanda Swim Strunk

You Poison My Mind

I poison my body
Because
You poison my mind

My words hover around you
Like lint in the air
Unnoticed
Until some light is shed on them

They whirl around you
Until
I breathe them back in
Just to spit it all back out
Again

The dirty dusty old words
Land around us
On our what-we-bring-to-the tables
For a moment
We dust off our arguments
Stirring it all up again

Our pattern
Is to let it settle again
So it settles
On my heart
But never on your ears

Will you ever
See my side of things
If you can't
See me

You distressed your damsel
My Prince
Turned Frog

Wanda Swim Strunk