

**Wilderness House Literary Review 14/4**

*Rachel Custer*  
**Of a Poet's Bravery**

Any man might tell you  
war is a coward's way

to kill what he fears  
of himself in another man,

sure of his own brave  
blood, his merciful word.

Here, atop the comforter,  
your fingers intertwine

with stillness, and still  
you dare to speak of fear.

What a soldier, in his mercy,  
will not tell you, Poet -

that dying man's mother  
wore a fragrance

with notes of citrus,  
notes of sandalwood,

that dying man's mother's  
wrists smelled just like yours.