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POETRY | SPRING 2020

## Don't leave

By Sophia Wilson

us here without

you.

if you leave (and you must),

and you do

every day, don't leave and

not return.

two weeks ago, you hugged our three small daughters

for the last time in who knows how long.

we made love, for the first time in a long while,

our limbs tender with things unsaid. we made love knowing that

this might be the last time. a week ago we shared a meal

around the table. we said grace. we sat, a small and poignant family,

in the midst of a fraught globe.

two days ago you left us for a run-down isolation chamber;

you wanted to keep us safe. at night we

glimpse your brave silhouette in the glow of a small caravan window.

each dawn, we watch you disappear around the bend of the hill.

knowledge of your weak lungs, fires panic signals, catching me unawares.

tending the sick is a vocation, in times of peace, in times of war-

until death do us part; no end in sight until the enemy is quelled,

or until its ruthless fangs take you down.

every day we hope for healing. every day we hope for peace.

every day we miss your kind face. we miss daddy. i miss my husband.

i feel angry when i hear about the ones who are blasé and careless;

the human bombs, flouting other's safety; the symptomatic travellers;

the ones still out there playing touch football-  
they're playing Russian roulette with the lives of somebody's parents or grandparents.  
i feel anxious. the future is uncertain dream. i pray it is not enduring nightmare.  
every day those struck down by illness count on you.  
every day we count on you  
to come back home.

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**Sophia Wilson lives with her primary care physician husband and their three children in Otago, New Zealand. She has a background in arts, medicine and psychiatry. Her poetry/prose can be found in StylusLit, Not Very Quiet, Ars Medica, Hektoen International, Poems in the Waiting Room (NZ), Corpus and elsewhere. In 2019 the manuscript for her first children's novel The Guardian of Whale Mountain was selected in the top ten for the Green Stories Competition (UK). She was shortlisted in a number of poetry competitions including the Takahē Monica Taylor Prize, a finalist in the 2019 Robert Burns Poetry Competition and winner of the 2020 International Writers Workshop Flash Fiction Competition. She is the recipient of a 2020 Creative New Zealand grant.**

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