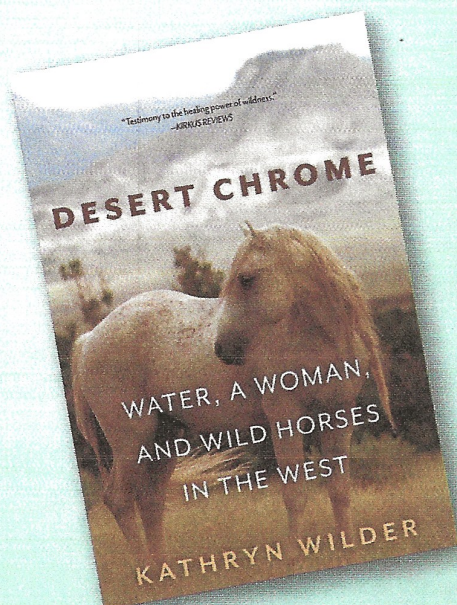


BOOK REVIEW

By Wolf Schneider



DESERT CHROME

HEALING WITH WILD HORSES IN THE WEST

SHE'S LIVED ON MAUI. IN ARIZONA AND CALIFORNIA. Finally, in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, where connecting with horses—especially wild mustangs—has helped Kathryn Wilder ground herself and come to terms with her grief, a former heroin addiction, a mismanaged motherhood, and all the mistakes that can pile up in a lifetime. In this raw, courageous memoir, written in her sixties, Wilder finds a fresh sense of purpose.

She moves to rural New Mexico with her dog Cojo. Her first impression is, "Next to a Rio Grande tributary and cottonwoods turning to gold sits an adobe casita with a flat roof and flagstone lanai. The casita is empty but for a single-bed mattress on a window seat of the same size." Wilder turns it into home for a while. She and Cojo adapt to the landscape, scheduling their winter days around sunlight. Undertaking a knee surgery in Taos, she suffers afterwards yet rebuffs addictive pain medicine. Knee better, she begins horseback riding again.

While scouting a remote Colorado cabin Wilder first glimpses the wild horses, noting how, "Truck motor ticking, the breeze holding my breath and theirs, I stand in the middle of an empty road in the middle of a huge no longer empty valley in the middle of my life watching wild horses until even the dust from their hooves on the powdery gray trail disappears." She moves to Colorado, gets involved in mustang activism, buys horses of her own, has accidents riding them, and even still insists, "I am for looking for another—ranch-broke and wise in the ways of cattle and taking care of a rider." Among the realizations horses have led her to? "Even in fear I have strength. That strength picks me up, gets me dressed, and feeds me through the tough times." ■



Kathryn Wilder
Photo by TJ Holmes