



All Ages Community
Northville
Creates
2026



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Teen Contributors

Inheritance

Poetry

A gift with no giver,
For they are dead and I am the liver,
Detoxifying and neutralizing what I have
Inherited.

Now I am to wonder what I have,
What has been diluted in my bloodstream,
Slowly building up and letting off steam.
It may be some physical features,
But ancient photos have been my only teachers.
And I can see a possible future
Where I am that young soldier in the picture,
But I can not be that creature beyond understanding
For I must bring myself beyond his standing.
That old blood has shown,
Laced within a tree newly sowed.
That pain has rowed downriver,
Becoming a new needle in my sliver,
Becoming new toxins in my liver.
That pain is what I have
Inherited.

Absence of knowledge,
Not absence of presence.
Echoes of the past are mirrored in the present.
And this donation shall not be deemed a present,
Just a weight meant to be carried
Just underneath the skin,
A final word from my kin.
And that whisper is what I have
Inherited.

Roen Ash

Roen Ash has been a storyteller for almost all his life. His passion for storytelling has taken him to the Iowa Young Writers' Studio to study fiction writing and he plans on studying Creative Writing at Emerson College. His work tackles masculinity, family, purpose, death, passion, religion, and growing up in the Midwest. He's always happy to share his work because he believes sharing inspires others to create, and the world doesn't have enough artists.

Anne Blonde opened the door for me an hour after she was supposed to. For that hour I was just sitting on her porch and freezing my ass off. She has this rocking chair that I thought would rock when I sat in it but it just cracked and jolted after some ice crunched underneath the rounded legs. There were two chairs, and one was more frozen than the other. I stood after the crack and leaned against a pillar, but that was also creaky. After a few minutes I went back to my car, circled the block a few times, went up to the door, and knocked again. Still, no answer. I just repeated the same system until she did.

She came to the door like she was dressed up for a date in the sixties. Her white hair was put into a style that made her look like a caricature of the period, she had makeup fit for a movie-star too. Her cheeks were rosy and her lips were a deep red. My first thought was that she also tried to do her best to hide her wrinkles, but I think now that she didn't actually try that hard. "Ah! Ellen, come in!"

"Hi, Mrs. Blonde. It's actually Emily. Thank you for having me."

"Please, honey: call me Ms. Blonde."

So I called her Ms. Blonde and came through the door. She told me to leave my boots by the door so I stomped them off on the mat and took them off. She took me into the living room, which looked like it was once used for living. I wouldn't have noticed the dust if there weren't clean spots wherever there used to be the legs of a table or chairs. Instead of normal furniture there was a big white sheet of paper over the floor with random splotches of color and finger painting. Near the bay windows on the streetside of the room was a royal-looking leather chair, a drafting desk, and a folding chair opposite the bigger one.

She motioned for me to sit in the folding chair so I set down my journal and phone on the table and did. She darted from one place to the next, constantly changing her mind about what she should do. She moved from the desk to a dresser to the front door and finally to the kitchen. When she was there, she yelled "Would you like some tea, darling?"

"Uh, sure, thanks!"

She came back a minute later with two cups, a mug for me and almost a goblet for herself. As she sat down in her chair, some wine spilled out.

"Alright, let's get started."

"You have a lovely home—"

"Cut the bullshit. Let's get this over with."

I choked on my tea and quickly cycled through my notes.

"Do you mind if I record this?"

"I really don't care, sweetie," she said with a chuckle.

I started recording on my phone. "Alright, good afternoon Ms. Blonde. In memory of your late husband, Arnold Blonde, the Monroe Tribune has some questions to celebrate your long and beautiful marriage."

Anne snickered. "Shoot, honey."

"Well, first, let's talk about how you two met. You were high school sweethearts, weren't you?"

"Sure! Me and him were a real duo back in the day. Y'know, Arnie was a real looker in high school. Not so much after—but what can you do?"

"You say 'a real duo.' What do you mean by that?"

"I mean we made a good team. I mean you gotta have the cheer captain and the quarterback together, right? I mean, that's what everybody else was thinking."

"So you guys were practically the image of high school romance."

"Yes, darling, we were. Our picture is still up there in the halls of that place. I mean, you're what? A senior? I'm sure you walk by that thing every day."

"Yes I do, ma'am. You two are practically the poster-couple of this town."

"Right."

"I mean, you still are. I'm sure everybody still brings up how old Anne and Arnold are doing. I know my mom and dad do."

"Real local celebrities."

There was a small silence and she drank from her cup.

"So why don't you tell me a little about how you two met?"

Arrangements continued

"No, I don't think I will."

"Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to intrude."

"What's the point, y'know? Everybody knows and if they don't they can have their moms and dads tell them about high school memories."

"We can go to the next question."

"Yeah. Hit me, honey."

"Well, okay. So, as soon as you two came out of high school, still a budding couple, Arnold volunteers to join the army! Tell me about that."

"What do you mean? What's there to tell?"

"Tell me why he left, how you felt, that sorta thing."

"He left to get away from me." She took another sip of her wine. She put it down and stood, talking as she went into the kitchen. "He figured Vietnam was safer than the war at home." She came back with a lit cigarette and sat down in the chair. "He was probably right, y'know? I can throw a lamp like an A-bomb." She chuckled and pointed to the corner of the room where there was, in fact, a shattered lamp that I didn't notice before. "And as for how I felt, ha! I never felt more alive." I laughed along with her just because I felt like she was gonna put the cigarette out on me if I didn't.

"Um... He proposed to you when he came back. How was that?"

"Stupid. Next question."

"Do you mind elaborating a little?"

"He was stupid to try to propose to me and I was stupid to agree. But what're you gonna do? Ain't no one else to love in this town, and it's not like saying 'no' is an option when there's a bunch of hungry townfolk waiting to see you buy a home together. Mob, that's what they were. It was worse 'cause then it was a veteran and his high school sweetheart. Nobody wants to see a veteran turned down. They used to hang women for that. But it's not like I was loyal, y'know—"

"I—"

"He wasn't either. We told each other as much. But they don't call it loyalty for guys, they call it commitment. Sure he was committed to me but he sure weren't loyal. Y'know how many girls there are in Vietnam, especially when you're killing all the men? I mean, God! I don't blame him, and he didn't blame me."

I turned off the recording. "I don't think I can write any of this for the article."

"Then don't, princess. I dunno why you guys're doing this whole thing in the first place."

"Well, I mean you two were almost a symbol for Monroe. Nobody wants to see that get torn down."

"How old are you, darling?"

I was confused but still answered. "Eighteen."

"Eighteen, huh? I was fifteen when they shoved us two together. There's a lot of difference between eighteen and fifteen. You don't really realize it when you're going through it, but it's there. I was young enough to believe what they were saying. 'You're so cute together,' 'you're perfect for each other,' 'he's a good young man,' 'what a sweet young girl.' It was cut out from the beginning. Ignore me, ignore him, it was us. I'm a wildfire and he was a flash flood, together we're one hell of a natural disaster."

"Can we get back to my questions?"

"Only if you want my answers."

I turned the phone back on. "So, tell me about how you started your family."

"It was an accident."

I turned the phone back off and gave her a mean look.

"What do you want from me, honey? I love my kids, but I'd be lying if I said a single one of them was made with any intention."

"Mrs. Blonde!"

"Ms. Blonde."

"Ms. Blonde, fine! They want to hear a happy story."

Arrangements continued

"Give 'em one. I don't care what you say came outta my mouth. I'm talking to you, not them. You're just a sweet little girl who came by to listen to the old woman ramble. Tell them I took the ring out of his palm and put it on my own out of excitement! Tell them I was screaming with joy when my first child was born! Tell them I pray every night that my Arnie's soul is in Heaven and one day soon I'll join him! I'll let you in on a little secret, darling: Arnold's poor soul is exactly where I'll be going, and it's not Heaven!" She let out a hearty laugh from deep in her belly.

I sighed and drank the tea. She took a drag off the cigarette. Then she put her wine cup down and looked out the window. Her weak grin faded and she turned to me, drained. She shifted in her throne.

"He died from a bad liver and he never once told me about the cancer in his stomach."

"Why not?"

"Why would he? What good would it have done? He wouldn't've gotten a pity party and he wouldn't've wanted one either. Books and movies about love tell you to tell your lover everything. Sometimes the truth comes out in silence, sometimes there's more love in silence. I knew he was gonna die ages before his liver did, and much longer before the tumor was planning on it."

"That's pretty bleak."

"We still doing this? I thought we were finally talking."

"Fine... What's with the name? Ms. Blonde. Single but you keep his name?"

"This may surprise you, but I did love the man. I loved him like how you love an ugly dog on the street that's all bones. He loved me like how an untrained pit bull looks at its prey. It weren't no puppy love. It was dog love. Rabid dog love. We were food to each other and we ripped each other to shreds but we still fed each other. At the end of the day, though, I'm my own woman again. Miss, y'know? Singular. He would have never let me do any of this," she motioned to the whole room and everything else.

We drank from our cups.

"I made the arrangements, Emily. I told them when and where to make the grave, told them what flowers he would've wanted, told them that he wouldn't've wanted a holy man to read from some holy book. But they decided the picture without my say. They chose some edited photo, made it black and white like he wasn't around for the advent of colored pictures. He was young in the picture. No wrinkles, full head of hair. We were in it together, but it wasn't us."

I closed my notes and pocketed my phone. I gazed around the room, dusty and cold and messy. The artwork in the middle of the room had paint that was maybe decades old, and there were gradients from newly painted to chipping away. Her wine was empty but the cigarette had much more to burn. She looked at me, ready to spill over like I was an old friend. "Do you mind if we talk some more?"

"Nothing would make me happier."

Roan Ash

Roan Ash has been a storyteller for almost all his life. His passion for storytelling has taken him to the Iowa Young Writers' Studio to study fiction writing and he plans on studying Creative Writing at Emerson College. His work tackles masculinity, family, purpose, death, passion, religion, and growing up in the Midwest. He's always happy to share his work because he believes sharing inspires others to create, and the world doesn't have enough artists.

I thought I had known pain before. The nights spent on the bathroom floor with only my tears and bottles of pills to keep me company. The time my head slammed into the ground as my arm throbbed while fans pulled me in opposite directions. Or maybe when I saw protest trucks parked outside the company building, with its flashing text. But it turns out that wasn't pain; compared to this, that was complete and utter peace.

I stood outside in the rain, my feet planted into the concrete floor as the words stared right back at me. "Kim Sarang," the banner said in bright crimson ink as if it represented my blood splattered across it, "get lost forever."

There are dozens of them, funeral wreaths, stretching what looked like miles across the company plaza. My vision started to blur around the edges until the world looked like some far-off memory instead of the present. It feels almost like a fever dream, the ground beneath me splitting open to reveal the dark abyss, and I was falling.

Falling.

Falling.

It was an in-the-moment kind of decision when I decided to go shopping that day. The sun was shining, the sky was clear, and I had just run out of my favorite lip tint. It was as if fate had set us up to meet, whether out of benevolence or hate, I still can't figure it out.

My hair whipped behind me as I turned corners to avoid the giant crowd of fans running towards me. The screams grew louder as they approached me in growing numbers. They were coming from all sides, squeezing me in faster and faster and—

An arm grabbed me harshly before pulling me into an alley. I froze before trying to pry the unknown person until I met his eyes.

Aaron.

His eyes screamed one thing. "*Keep running.*" And so we did, we ran until the fans disappeared and our legs were nothing but a pile of Jell-o.

I wheezed out a deep breath as we slowed to a stop and started to run my hand through my hair as I tried to untangle the mess it had become.

"What," I coughed, "the hell?"

Aaron eyed me before scoffing, "Well, that's a nice way to say thank you."

"I would say thank you if I could breathe."

I looked up to see Aaron looking unaffected, his hair only a little bit out of place, as if he were always chased by a stampede of cheetahs on a daily basis.

"Is this...normal for you?" The words sounded so breathless, I contemplated whether I should have run harder during training.

"I mean, I'm one of the most popular idols in the world, so yeah, I guess,"

"Humble," I mused. The silence after that was loud, the air surrounding us with awkwardness.

"Well...I guess." Aaron fumbled as he gestured in a random direction. "Nice seeing you?"

"Huh? Oh yeah, nice seeing you." I bowed my head quickly before spinning around fast. My face burned, the embarrassment climbing up my neck. *What a great way to meet your senior.*

Hopefully, no one saw our conversation. Gosh, if we get brought into a dating scandal, everyone will kill me—

"Hey!" His voice cut through my spiraling thoughts as he jogged towards me before stopping suddenly, as if he was wondering why he called out in the first place.

"Yeah?"

"Um, good luck on your next comeback...fighting!" He gave me two thumbs up before a shy smile spread across his face. I found it funny that the man who made married women swoon with his charismatic personality could look so...bashful.

"Thanks," I laughed, returning his thumbs up before waving goodbye again.

How it Feels to Be Loved continued

“Sarang!!”

I bolt out of my daze and turn around to see a crowd of fans circling me. Their cameras are filming, the flash on and blinding me with its light.

“Guess who it is! It’s crazy you have any pride left to show yourself after what you did.”

“*How dare you steal our Aaron from us!*”

“Do you have no shame?”

A sharp pain forms on my arm. Followed by another, and another. They are throwing things at me. My clothes slowly dampen as liquid and food quickly soaks in and bruises form underneath as rocks fly through the air.

Stop. Please, stop. I want to cry but the tears won’t free themselves from my eyes.

Suddenly, I’m pushed backwards, and my mask is ripped off my face.

“Show us your face, you—” The words hit harder than rocks ever could.

This is what you get, I think, for thinking that people actually liked you. That was one of the things I learned as an idol. Being famous and being loved were not the same thing.

The next time Aaron and I met, I was staring at shrimp crackers in the convenience store like a total psychopath.

Aaron thought I was deciding between that and a bar of chocolate. What he didn’t know at the time was that I was wondering how much weight I would gain and if it was even worth the number on the scale after. And even if I did buy and eat them, I knew I would throw up ten minutes later. It seemed like a waste of money.

Aaron certainly didn’t think so. He snatched the bag right out of my hand and bought it before I could even protest. He then slipped a handful of crackers into my hands before gesturing at me to eat them. I think he could tell I was hesitating because he weaved our hands together and steadied them as he slowly brought them to my mouth. It took us a while, but soon I only had two left in my hand when I declared I was full.

I was scared he was going to ask questions, but he just smiled and took the leftovers before popping them in his mouth.

“Thank you,” I said later as he walked me towards my dorm.

“Anything for you.” His smile stretched wide, his eyes glimmering in the soft moonlight. It was so contagious that I felt myself smiling back.

I’m happy, I suddenly realized, because of him.

It started to rain. What started as a slow drizzle quickly became a torrential downpour. The sky was dark, filled with clouds so thick it felt as if I would never see the sun again.

My clothes are stained with splatters of red. I can’t tell if it’s from the food or from me, but at this point, I can’t make myself care. I have no idea where I can go. I could go back to my dorm and deal with the awkward silence and tension that hovers between my group mates and me. I don’t blame them; I practically ruined their careers over a...a situationship! However, getting a hotel room would be even worse; if anyone saw me or reported me entering, my door would be kicked down in a matter of minutes.

With no other choice, I continue down the shadowy alleyway, accompanied only by drunk businessmen laughing as they drink shot after shot with their colleagues in small, hidden restaurants. They seem so happy, though that might be because of the alcohol. I watch from afar, wondering how long it’s been since I had laughed that freely without a care in the world.

“Hey, pretty girl!” One of them shouts mid-conversation. I should sprint away, but I can’t find any energy to stiffen in fear, yet alone run.

“Don’t be sad!” He cries, “Life sucks sometimes, but all you’ve got to do is wait for the sunshine to chase away the clouds!”

Well that was unexpected...and cheesy.

His friend slaps him across the chest, “What nonsense are you spilling? Don’t listen to him, he’s just an emotional drunk!”

How it Feels to Be Loved continued

Both of them forgot about me as they returned to their bickering while they left me to ponder his words.

Wait for the sunshine.

I found very early in my life that people tell you to wait a lot. Wait until you grow up, wait until next year, wait until your chance comes, wait until everyone's food comes out to eat. You told yourself "next year" every year until it was too late, and all you could do was sit in a puddle of your regret.

When I debuted, I promised myself I would change this cesspool of an industry and cleanse it one way or another. I would change the norms, I would date, I would fight crazy fans and protest for privacy, and I wouldn't let any idol get overworked until their breaking point. But every year, as I was hit with scandal after scandal, the confidence in me slowly disappeared, and I repeated to myself, *wait until we are older, more popular, more supported, then you can change it, then you can help.* But now I stand here a bigger coward than before, denying dating rumors, watching as fans broke into apartments, watching as every generation after me got thinner and weaker and sicker.

Before I knew it, I reached my destination. I found it almost half a year after I met Aaron at the convenience store. It was quiet, peaceful, and as far away from the city as I could get. I thought I was the only one who knew about this place until one day, Aaron practically catapulted through the door. Apparently, it was just because he was running really fast, but I still believe that he slipped on a puddle outside the door and crashed. When I told him that, he shook his head furiously and told me he was "as graceful as a swan," before proceeding to trip over two cans and a plastic chair.

I remember how much I laughed that day, every moment filled with jokes and sarcasm and a trace of admiration and warmth lacing every word.

That night, I kissed him. It was quick and shy, but it lit a feeling inside of me I never felt before. It ended quickly because after that night our fans found out, and we were ruined in seconds.

"I miss you," I whisper into the night sky, a secret told only to the stars. The world falls silent until I feel a familiar presence behind me.

"I miss you too."

I don't turn around; I know who it is.

"Are you..." He pauses, contemplating his words, "Are you okay?"

I shrug slightly, "Do I look okay?"

He doesn't respond and instead takes in my ruined clothes.

"Why did you come?" I continue, suffering in the loud silence.

"Do you want us to end?"

The question catches me so off guard that I spin to face him, "What?"

I wait for him to take it back, to say that we won't work and will never work.

But he doesn't.

Instead, he just watches me patiently as I sort out my thoughts.

"But, your... your bandmates," I finally stutter out, "They're already suffering so much because of me."

"They don't blame you for something that was out of your control. They know we're happy."

"But what about *my* bandmates? My fans, they are going to—"

"Sarang." The seriousness in his gaze stops me. "Why are you so afraid to try?"

The words disappear right from my mouth. There are so many things to be afraid of, so many things I could list right now, but I don't. Because a selfish part of me doesn't want us to end. But can this feeling even be called selfish?

No, it can't. It's love, love cannot be selfish.

So, for the first time in my life, I chase away the clouds until they reveal the magnificent sun behind it.

And as I stand in its light, I realize: I know what it feels like to be famous, but now I also know how it feels to be loved.

How it Feels to Be Loved continued

Claire Kim

Claire Kim, a freshman in high school, is so excited to share her short story "How It Feels to Be Loved." It combines her two favorite things: writing and K-pop, into a story about love and the dark side of her favorite industry. She hopes this story tugs at your heartstrings and makes you look at life a little differently as you follow along Sarang and Aaron's journey.

Dear Stelle,

I made a total of three mistakes during our relationship. Now thinking about it, it shouldn't even count as a relationship because it was so one-sided, but we'll get to that later. Back then, we were only sophomores in high school, and the only thing we had in common was our mathematics class. You always slept during the lecture, and on the rare days when you weren't sleeping, you'd doodle in your sketchbook, daydreaming of something you called "true" freedom. On the days you grew bored of drawing, you'd write notes to me and slide them onto my desk. And, most of the time, I ignored them.

Perhaps that was my first mistake.

On the first day of sophomore year, you were wearing a white sweater, a black skirt, and a pair of bright red sneakers. Our mathematics teacher assigned our seats, and we were placed together in the back of the classroom. You glanced lazily at the bright sunshine and the bird's nest in the school roof. Then, reaching out your hand, you smiled and introduced yourself to me. "Hi, Ree," you had said. "I'm Stelle. I hope we'll get to know each other better throughout the school year."

To be honest, you amazed me more than I was willing to admit. I'd never seen anyone so careless about their academics. Back then, I looked down on you because I thought you were throwing your future away.

But it wasn't that. You were dreaming again, about your "true" freedom.

It was not until April that I realized I was falling in love with you. It was stupid, really. We were debating about a novel I recommended to you back in January. In it, the author was portraying a message you constantly thought about: freedom. "The book is talking about freedom from society's pressures," I had insisted. "The protagonist defies social norms and creates a path for himself, eventually leading to his true happiness."

You shook your head, raking your hand through your hair out of frustration. "The author is focusing on the protagonist's eventual ability to pursue what he wants. I'm not restating my point for the millionth time," you snapped. There was something you said earlier—your claim about the protagonist's freedom. Unfortunately, I was too full of myself to listen carefully, so I no longer remember.

I've never seen someone so adamant or frustrating. I had pulled so many passages from the book, and even after all that, you stuck to your point. It's a wonder how I began caring for you from that moment, but I think it's because I've spent my whole life being told that I was always right.

That was my second mistake.

We went on our first date on April 29th because I'd finally given love a chance. You were wearing a fashionable leather jacket along with a pair of dusty sunglasses you retrieved from your closet. We went out for matcha at our local coffee shop, and you blushed when I complimented your fashion taste. The air was fresh, and the sky was the same clear blue as your eyes. In the far distance, you spotted a field of dandelions. With your insistent pleading, I reluctantly agreed to go, and you tried to weave a flower crown. But to your utter dismay, it kept falling apart, and you were stubborn enough to refuse any help from me.

On May 7th, I went back to the dandelions and spent an hour arranging the flowers perfectly so I could give them to you. When you saw them, your face lit up. "I was passing by the field, and I thought of you," I said. The entire explanation was a lie. I deliberately went to the field, and you never left my mind.

And yet, like all teenage love, it never lasts. Adults always said that young love was always deep-rooted in infatuation. "You don't truly love each other," they would say. "Your hormones are just all over the place. Don't mistake your foolishness for genuine emotion." Truth be told, they might be right. And yet, although it has been a long five years, I still know for a fact that whatever feelings I had for you consumed my mind as if it were a forest fire. Even though I loved you, I couldn't convey my true feelings.

That was my third and final mistake.

The Freedom to Love continued

I've always wanted to be loved. I've had no past relationships, and before I met you, my mental health was on a tightrope, and I had given up on my social life completely. My parents expected me to get into a top university, so I spent most of my time curled up in my room, studying textbooks until my eyesight blurred. When you gave me the love I needed, it felt as if my lungs had finally remembered how to breathe.

When you forget something for a long time, you forget how to react to it.

In this case, I didn't know how to return your love, especially when I realized you liked me back.

And so, I didn't. You were constantly reaching out to me, spreading your positivity like you always do, yet I was sitting there, dumbfounded. On my mother's birthday, you handed me a canvas. It was a painting you had drawn the night before: my mother, you, and me beneath an open sky, surrounded by vibrant dandelions. "I hope she likes it," you said, not looking me directly in the eyes.

I hated how, back then, I didn't put any effort or initiative into our conversations. We couldn't talk about protagonists and freedom like we used to. I was scared that you would leave me, and I wouldn't be able to handle it because I had grown too attached. That was why I distanced myself.

Even you, with all your beauty and charm, couldn't hold us together on your own. We were balancing on breaking bridges, and you were the only one trying to fix it. As for me, I was already gazing down into the abyss, wondering when this relationship would finally crumble. While you stitched your wings that yearned for the skies, I insisted I was destined to stay on solid ground.

We haven't talked ever since the end of sophomore year. No one knows where you are now; it was as if you had finally found the courage to break free from your chains of sorrow. I know that you've found your freedom now, but it still feels as if mine was destined to be achieved with you. Do you remember the coffee shop we went to all those years ago? I still save a spot for you as if you're sitting in front of me, sipping your ube matcha with a mischievous smirk on your face. Your shadows are carved into my life, and although I have tried over and over again to erase them, it would mean losing my memories of you.

My point is, *I loved you*. I apologize for everything—it's the least I can do. You've always dreamed of "real" freedom, and I've spent years wondering what it meant. Now I know. It was never about escapism; "real" freedom meant having the freedom to love freely. And sometimes, late at night, I wonder if you achieved your dream. If so, maybe the only possible way was for you to do it without me.

Yours,

Ree

Faith Shen

Faith Shen is currently a freshman at Northville High School. She created "The Freedom To Love" to explore the themes of identity, love, and longing. Outside of writing, she spends her time doomscrolling on her phone and occasionally crying over math homework.

Adult Contributors

Out Building

Artwork - Acrylics



Bruce Agababian

I decided that now is the time to fulfill something I've always wanted to do. Drawing landscapes and people. I finally decided that now is an excellent time to pursue my passion and dream. I've been exploring different elements to add to my drawings. There are many facets and techniques, such as texture, backgrounds and color combinations to tell the story of my drawings and experiences.



Teri Allen

After retiring from a career in the jewelry industry, I pursued something I always enjoyed, drawing and painting. I continue to explore and learn more about these mediums and continue to create art. It is so gratifying to create and share with others.



Theresa Anderson

Theresa is from the Philadelphia area and relocated to Northville, MI where she started taking classes at the Northville Art House in the fall of 2024. She enjoys watercolors, drawing, writing, and learning to play the piano.

It started on a roll

It started as a task

It started as a job

It started as a sponge

Intern, before the roll

Not just Scott's Paper rolls

but the other cardboard tubes; rolled

waiting, collecting dust in the corner

to be framed; hung

on the wall for everyone to see

Big pharma, big margins

Big money, big dreams

Now, it's cans and green beans

but no cash

flow, still on a roll

Inspired by "Sorting out Andy" by Hernan Bas

Theresa Anderson

Theresa is from the Philadelphia area and relocated to Northville, MI where she started taking classes at the Northville Art House in the fall of 2024. She enjoys watercolors, drawing, writing, and learning to play the piano.

His footprints emerge in the white dust on the concrete below, as if a ghost is walking in front of me. Bill leads Nancy and me further into the facility. My eyes are frantic. It's too much to take in at once, especially sight unseen. Even after all of these years, the overwhelming vastness takes me by surprise every time I walk into a manufacturing facility for the first time. Behind me I see the trail of my own steel-toed footprints.

The morning starts as expected with a brief but pleasant greeting and safety presentation. We meet with operations, finance, and scheduling in a small conference room. The furniture is mismatched, relics from three decades ago, still much too large for the space. It is cramped. Bill, Chris, and Dave explain that ingredient costs are three times higher than they should be. They are looking to Nancy to fix their issue. The meeting yields many grievances, vague concerns, and even blame, but very little useful information to help us solve the task at hand. However, Nancy and I have come prepared. Prior to the visit, we started our research and are here to complete it. We will find out why costs are three times the expected amount.

Lunch break is a sweet treat. I am ready for delicious farm-to-table food from the local brewery. Pair it with a good beer to ease the pain from the morning and prepare for the pain to come this afternoon. The cherry on top – time with Nancy is – time well spent.

Six footprints tracking in the snow globe we've entered. An invisible wall of sugar engulfs me. It goes straight through my nostrils; hits the back of my throat and makes its way into my lungs. A type of sugar burn I've never felt before or even knew existed. Both sickening and delightful. Shaking off the disorientation, my curious mind is back to the task at hand.

Observing: flour, butter, sugar, mix, press, form, and carousel to the frozen tundra above.

“Nancy?!” I shout to get her attention. “I'm so glad you are here.”

Nodding, she smiles with wide invigorating eyes. We press on.

Suddenly, the sugar burn softens into a warm sensation. What's that smell? I inhale deeply. The source reveals itself – rich chocolate frosting being spread over every inch of hundreds of cakes, swirling past on waves of conveyors.

More observing: batter, mixing, baking, cutting, forming, cooling, frosting, decorating.

The freshly baked, assembled cakes float across the cocoa-scented sea as they cool. The cakes receive a smooth, thick layer of frosting then a decorative swirl before ascending on the carousel.

“BAD CAKE!”

An unexpected yell loud enough for all to hear. The production line operator declares the cake's quality less than satisfactory. The operator cradles the white Styrofoam plate supporting the brown square layered cake. With a bend of an elbow, it's gone. The beautiful frosted and decorated cake disappears into a trash can.

I stare in bewilderment. One by one the beautifully imperfect squares disappear. I don't try to count them. It is too fast. A messy, muddy trail of rich, chocolate buttercream leads down the dark rabbit hole. The lifting and shifting of the cakes sends wafts of chocolaty airwaves in my direction. My thoughts float on a cocoa cloud to the chocolate milk stout on the happy hour menu.

Sight Unseen continued

Again, I bring my focus back to the task at hand. Nancy is speaking with Bill, likely about the quality defect. The sugar-fog starts to settle around me again...

“Tracy, did you see that *bad cake*?”

Nancy’s question is rhetorical.

She continues “It clearly answers our question. I am going to go fetch Chris and Dave. I told Bill to meet us at the cake batter vats. I will be right back with Chris and Dave. Will you meet us over there too?”

“Okay.” I say suppressing my curiosity to ask the question why and head towards the vats.

Bill is waiting next to the stainless-steel cake batter mixing vat. Nancy joins him with Chris and Dave in tow.

A rogue wave of cocoa redolence instantly infuses my airways. I welcome the distraction like an old friend. Nancy is an old friend and she has solved the task at hand...

Abruptly, my mind snaps into focus.

Sight unseen, Nancy pushes Bill, Chris, and Dave into the vat full of cake batter.

My mouth drops open. For a moment that feels like eternity, no sound, no breath, no scent. Only six ghostly footprints.

I exhale deeply.

“Now, that is bad cake.” Nancy says. We stare at each other for a moment.

“Happy hour?”

“Happy hour?”

We say at the same time and smile.

Theresa Anderson

Theresa is from the Philadelphia area and relocated to Northville, MI where she started taking classes at the Northville Art House in the fall of 2024. She enjoys watercolors, drawing, writing, and learning to play the piano.

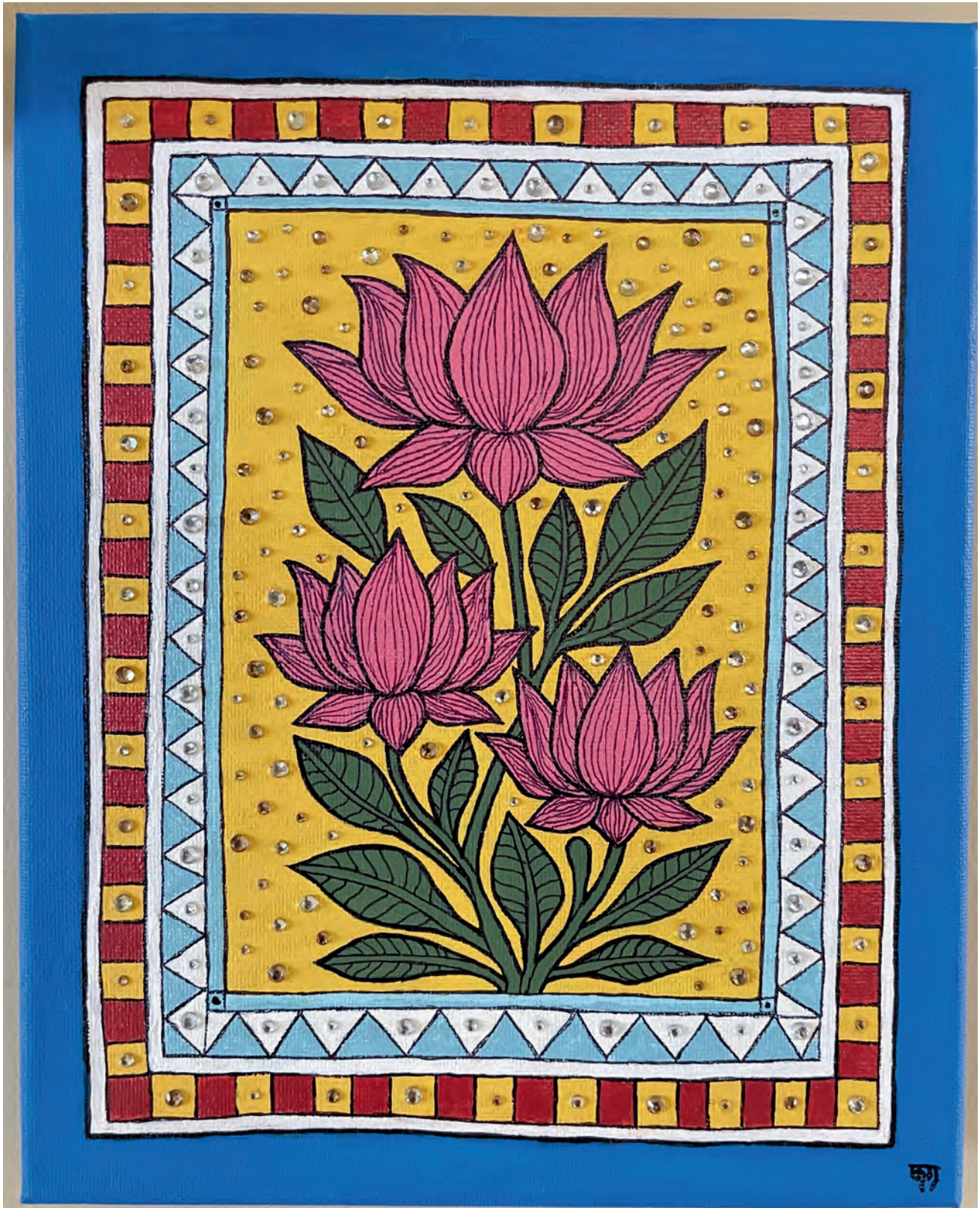
Happy Dance Greeting Card

Artwork - Watercolor, ink, acrylic stamps, cardstock, mica shimmer spray, watercolor paper



Erica Attenberger

Erica Attenberger is a local mom who enjoys paper crafting and card making within the margins of daily life. She balances a career in technology with evenings spent in pursuit of handmade crafts. She enjoys card making because it blends messy art with elements of precision. She hopes her handmade cards help elevate someone's day with a piece of mini art.



Thara Balasubramaniam

This piece celebrates the natural beauty of the world, using the lotus as a catalyst to encourage peace and mindfulness. I drew inspiration from my own identity by utilizing rhinestones and exterior colorful patterns, to represents how culture exists everywhere you go. The bright colors were used to mirror the unique natural colors of our land, and the blue background to demonstrate the oceans our earth resides on.



Jannet Beers

I've always been captivated by the meditative rhythm of stitching, but it wasn't until later in life that I began to explore cross-stitch as a form of modern art. Drawing inspiration from technology, patterns, and the everyday, I create pieces that intersect the traditional craft with contemporary themes. My work reflects the relationship between structure and nature, blending geometric, man-made forms with the organic rhythms of the natural world, while also celebrating the beauty and simplicity found in our daily lives.

Think a little less of the begrudging chore to put off,
rough concrete, rusty pipes,

And a little more of excavating a tomb of antiquity
rediscovering life long forgotten in catacombs under the kitchen.

An archive of maybes for unfinished projects, ancient report cards
hobbies hoarded away for later and décor declared inconvenient (for now).

Bunker where outgrown baby things are blanketed over to hide from the creep of dust and discoloration
awaiting the potential of new marching orders.

Cellar where gown and veil are stored away,
a sealed hope that the bride upstairs has gained bolder flavor with age.

Dungeon holding boughs of holly hostage,
ornaments encased in makeshift sarcophagi until the proper time.

Foundation holding up the bustle of family activities above,
freely offering yourself up to be pushed down by the weight of our racing feet,
keeping traces of things forgotten until we become archaeologists ready to find them again.

Sarah Burchart

Sarah is a wife, mother, and librarian. She usually daydreams much better than she writes, but her writing interests include Christian theology, exploring the value of human life, and using poetry forms to play with words. Otherwise, she can be found reading speculative fiction and manga or playing board games with her family.

A Merchant

Poetry

I am a merchant;
A peddler of Me.
Special wares and customized deals for all who need.
We seek only to please
the ever righteous customer
in exchange for but a small fee:
your undying love and loyalty.

For I am a broker,
a lifelong salesman trained in the craft.
Come one come all!
We are a conglomerate for the masses,
selling shoulders and pieces of heart.
50, 70, 90, percent off,
take just what you please.
Not liking what you see?
Well you're in luck and one custom order away
from meeting all your needs.

The warehouse is vast, dear consumer,
our stores never run low.
The storefront we'll keep polished and
the mannequin out for show.
If the stock runs out I assure you we'll get in some more.
There's plenty to go around,
enough for every season and mood.
Something to feel pretty,
something to keep you warm,
something to keep you company,
when even your consolation prize is gone.

The restricted section please forego, but
from clearance to bogo to full price,
customer satisfaction we prioritize.
Oh, I think you'll especially enjoy
our return policy:
a full refund on demand, AND
you get to keep all purchased goods.
We never take them back,
even if we should.
And of course, it is
a personal guarantee,
that if you smile and ask nicely,
Love, it is all yours
for free.

Nikki Chopra

Nikki is a relatively new Northville resident, having moved here straight after completing her undergraduate degree in 2024. She is currently a graduate student at the University of Michigan, studying environmental conservation and science communication. Nikki has always loved literature and enjoyed writing, creative or otherwise, and rediscovered her interest in poetry within the last year as a means of processing life events and complex feelings.



Debbie Eichholtz

Wonder, in the face of a child is the purest form of blessing. I spent the last 24 years surrounded by Northville Public School children. It was the most incredible opportunity in the world.

Tables and chairs
under the long, green arms
of the maple tree.

Clouds overhead,
flowing like a bridal veil.

Guests, chattering birds,
on the brick patio.

Cool white wine
in long stem glasses,
dripping

like the sweat
trickling under arms
and between legs.

Clouds graying,
lowering,
like weighted blankets.

The wind
picks up plates.
Napkins fly like doves
to nearby branches.

The first drop of rain,
a wet kiss.
Then the sky releases
an urgent downpour.

Guests flutter,
scurry inside.

Laughter like
the clinking of glasses.

s

Christine Fankell

Christine Fankell graduated from Northville High School where she was encouraged to write poetry by her English teacher, Patricia Dorian. She went on to study poetry in the Iowa Writer's Workshop. Recently retired from 35 years in public education, Christine is rediscovering her passion for writing poetry as a participant in Rise & Write Northville events as well as the Stafford Challenge.

I dreamed a dream that bubbled up
through veins, vessels and sun burnt skin
until it made its way into the wider world.
It rooted in my heart, informing actions
without acknowledgment.

It grew in crevices, the place where
knees bend, the crooks of elbows,
it whispered into glittering bones,
reminding me of ancient texts blown
clean by men and sandstorms.

I dreamed a dream that spoke in music,
rise, fall and crescendo with voices lifted,
with hope, tears, joy and passion!
It came unbidden, deep in the darkness,
inviting me to surrender, to pause.

I dreamed a dream that worked its way
through good times and bad, over smooth seas
and tumbling waterfalls, until it broke through.
First from the earth, rising though feet,
then upward to belly, gathering force

it flowed into the chest, the throat,
the arms and head, bursting like sunbeams
through my forgotten crown, had it been there
inside this whole time? I dreamed a dream,
that dreamed me into the world.

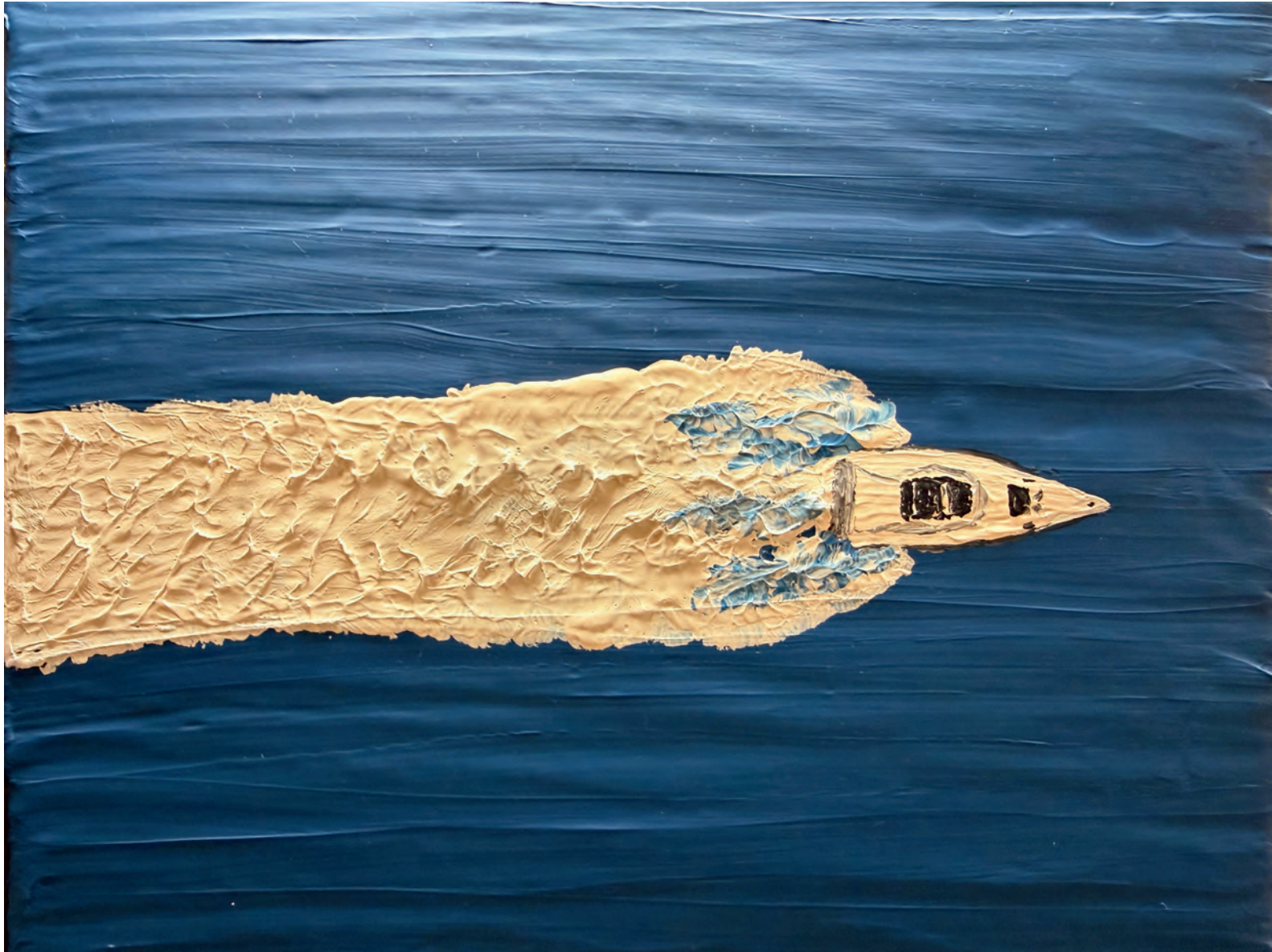
Susan Haifleigh

Architect by training, poet by design. Susan's poetry bridges the fault line between the human and the sacred. She has been published in the books "Story Medicine", "Scars: An Anthology", "The Songs of Summer", "The Stafford Challenge Anthology", online and in print "Beyond Words Literary Journal/Berlin", "The Closed Eye Open", "Women Raise Our Voices", "Mocking Owl Roost", "The Dolomite Review" and "Peninsula Poets 2025." She is the team lead for "Rise & Write Northville" a community project which weaves writing and poetry into the fabric of life. Susan was selected for the first cohort of the Fahmidan Journal/UK writing mentorship program. She was nominated for a "Best of the Net" award for her work on the "Fahmindan Mentorship Issue." Susan lives in Northville, Michigan.

Social/Online Links:

Instagram: @sacredarcpoetry

Substack: <https://substack.com/@susanhaifleigh>



Anne Holder

Anne began her creative journey only two years ago after retiring from a 35+ year career in Corporate America. She began experimenting with various class at the Northville Art House and loves the encouraging community of neighbors she's found there.

She loves getting lost in drawing, painting, and learning new techniques. She enjoys watercolor, acrylics, drawing, and taking classes with instructors that create opportunities to experiment and force her to try new approaches and techniques.

She believes everyone has a creative side, they just are too hard on their own abilities!

She has lived in Michigan for 10 years and is a member of the Northville Art House, 100 Women Who Care Northville, and Northville Women's Club, in addition to being a wife and devoted mom. She is an advocate for those experiencing housing and food insecurity and makes lunches for NOAH @ Central.

I Didn't Invite The Ghost In, But I'm Begging Him to Stay

Poetry

I dreamed in dust
before you came.
I read volumes of verse;
frost blanketed the panes.

And how easily you moved
from present to presence.

I welcomed you,
specter, into bed each night
with arms wide, heart wide,
everything but
eyes wide.
There we lay, bare
and barely breathing
among piles of hazy promises.

I bore it all for us:
your hollow chest,
your weightless limbs,
your boundless love.
My knees wouldn't buckle,
but my back broke with grace.

In the morning,
you gather me like flowers,
holding on 'til your hands
slide down into my soul.

Can't I see that your love wanders?
That it was always passing through?
Even a fool could see
that you didn't bother
taking off your shoes.

*Look, you say,
even the frost doesn't stay.*

So I watch it melt.
I listen

as the earth
beckons
each
drop
home.

Whitney Jones

Movie lover and crossword puzzle enthusiast.

From here on,
you were always small
dropping a full bowl
of Gralma's outmeal
top down
mush, right in the shag

worse yet,
really special super breakfast bowl
with sugar and cinnamon
salt and pepper
and Granpa's favorite syrup
All of it.

From here on,
you always passed this wool
from sticky finger to sticky finger
and it never left your body.

Gralma cut stone with her eyes
She was done shearing sheep.
Granpa waved his slipper around
cursing the damned cat

Lucas Kane

An amateur writer, illustrator, runner, and juggler. He lives in Plymouth, and he works at the Northville District Library.



All Ages Community
**Northville
Creates**

Sarah Milroy

Graphic designer, artist, and Northville Resident.



Cheryl Montemayor

Cheryl Montemayor is a versatile artist who enjoys exploring many different mediums. Acrylic painting and charcoal & line drawing are her current favorites. Taking classes and workshops through the Northville Art House has helped her find a supportive community of like-minded artists and opportunities to try out new creative pursuits. She has been a Northville Township resident for more than 29 years.

Drip,
 Drip,
 Drip,

The heavy downpour never seems to let up,
gazing warily at dark clouds,
dashing to and fro, seeking cover,
she can't quite escape the torrent of bad news.

“If it bleeds, it leads”
Our attention economy weaponizes the lure of negative news,
opinions offered as fact, catastrophizing each event,
algorithms designed to polarize and magnify,
like a Cat 2 hurricane blowing across warm waters,
round table discussions devolve into shouting matches.

Breaking News!
 Breaking News!
 All day, every day...

Social media and cable news were the first to go,
screen time limits helped,
guilt claws at her, situations are dire,
surely her angst must somehow improve world events!
Hiding from the world brings peace, but feels wrong.

A new year dawns with hope renewed,
like sunlight breaking through the clouds,
she'll raise her head and seek out positive views,
defying horrific headlines, she trusts
good news will still shine through.

Cheryl Montemayor

Cheryl Montemayor is an emerging author who has recently discovered the joy of writing poetry and short story fiction. She has enjoyed learning about her craft through creative writing classes at the Northville Art House and Rise & Write Northville writers groups. She has been a Northville Township resident for more than 29 years.

As the sun peaked above the eastern horizon, she stretched her long limbs skyward and waved her many leaves in the gentle morning breeze. ‘Whoops! There go a few more’, she thought as several brightly colored leaves floated to the ground far below. Towering above the little village perched on the side of a small swift river, the majestic elm tree surveyed her home for more than a century. How she loved to watch the inhabitants as they started their morning routines. Children bringing their dogs to the little park just behind the Art House. Firemen washing their rigs in front of the station, as police cars started out on patrol. Shopkeepers opening their doors as patrons brought their coffee and pastries out to enjoy in the town square.

Her little park was cozied between the library and post office, right on the corner of Cady and Wing Streets. From her height, she could see all the way to the water wheel where the road bends and the trains pass by. So many years she’d stood tall, keeping watch over the town. It was always so full of life and excitement; parades with marching bands coming down Main Street, festivals, art shows, and Friday night concerts. Recent cool breezes meant the skeletons would soon arrive with all the costumed children, Parmenter’s apple cider and donuts.

By far, her favorite thing to watch was the horses. The racing track was just a few blocks away and she could see them warming up. How beautiful they were, with their sleek long limbs stretching and pumping around the oval track. On race nights, it was so exciting. The crowds of people would come, the lights would shine down, and the horses would race each other to the sound of applause. Sometimes she would envy the horses, with their freedom to run. ‘How delightful to move about and see the people so close up’, she thought.

Most days she was content to stand sentinel above the town, casting shade on the locals as they hurried past. But sometimes she thought wistfully of the friends she’d lost from their grove of stately elm trees. She was the last of her kind, a rare type of elm, one of the tallest in all the state. Even her beloved horses would soon be gone. She’d heard the track was closing down to make room for new parks and homes.

Warm spring sunshine woke her from a long winter’s rest. She greeted her bird friends and searched for green sprouts among the grass. Her own buds were sparse this year and her bark was achy. Sadly she recognized the signs, her time in Northville city was coming to an end. She knew what came next, she’d watched it happen to her friends. Men would come and cut down her limbs, uproot her stump, and carry her away in pieces. It was all part of life, she sighed, but still she couldn’t help wanting to stay in her little town.

As summer approached, she watched woefully as the people gathered to make plans to bring her down. One morning a man with a chainsaw appeared, setting his ladder against her trunk. ‘This is it’ she cried, as her upper limbs came down. But as she waited for the final blows, she wondered what was taking so long. The man would arrive each morning and wave his saw around but only small chunks fell to the ground. He was so gentle, it almost felt like a tickle. Some days the man would consult with a pretty lady holding a sketchbook. ‘What are they up to?’ she wondered.

At first, few people stopped but after some weeks they began to gather. They were pointing at her trunk with delight. “Look! There’s the water wheel.” “I see the church and an airplane.” She was astonished, she wasn’t coming down after all! Her home town loved her so much they didn’t want her to go. They carved her trunk into beautiful scenes of their town. A ceremony was held to display the beautiful art. She was so proud. ‘It doesn’t get any better than this’ she thought. Just then, a young boy turned to his friends and proclaimed his favorite part was the horse rearing high atop the trunk. They had carved the majestic old tree into one of the beautiful proud animals she loved so much. Now she could stay at the corner of Cady and Wing Streets forever, a beautiful monument to the little town’s history.

Cheryl Montemayor

Cheryl Montemayor is an emerging author who has recently discovered the joy of writing poetry and short story fiction. She has enjoyed learning about her craft through creative writing classes at the Northville Art House and Rise & Write Northville writers groups. She has been a Northville Township resident for more than 29 years.



Jerry Morris

Jerry Morris is a metalsmith with 25 years of experience. His training has been primarily at Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center (BBAC). He designs and creates sculptures for home and garden, as well as jewelry. Jerry's work has appeared in many juried shows at BBAC and in Starring the Gallery.



Lynn Parkllan

Lynn Parkllan is a color painter of landscape and abstract compositions with 25 years of experience. She trained primarily at Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center with teacher Leslie Masters. In 2024, the Woods Gallery in Huntington Woods displayed 23 of her paintings in a solo show.

When you graduated from college last May you thought your most challenging years were behind you. You had known hard work still lay ahead, but you imagined something would be different. That you would feel different.

You earned a degree in nursing from the prestigious University of Michigan. Your family had been so proud of you when you received the admission letter. You could still feel the thick paper underneath your fingertips. You'd held it so many times in your hands that the edges began to change colors. That paper, which you stared at in disbelief, also signified hope and the validation you always wanted.

An ever bright student, you earned high marks all throughout high school, but when you prepared the application to U of M the doubts were undeniable. There was no way they would accept you. That letter should have changed those concerns; it didn't. But you believed that once you attended school, they would go away. In actuality, the imposter syndrome only grew. You didn't let it stop you from working your hardest, but you couldn't rid yourself of the sense that you were inadequate compared to your classmates.

"Don't think about them. You deserve to be there," your mother advised on the phone from her home in Chicago.

But the feelings festered like a gaping wound. Each year you held out hope that it would get better. Maybe once you graduated? Maybe when you walked across the stage? Maybe when you received the diploma in the mail? Maybe when you landed your first job?

Months after beginning your career, you sat alone in your kitchen, and stared into your mug of coffee. You watched the steam rise and vanish in the air and with it, any hope you had. You didn't feel like you belonged in this corner of Michigan, away from your family. You didn't feel like you belonged at the hospital as an ICU nurse. You didn't even feel like you deserved your diploma which was tucked away in an unpacked box somewhere--you had never bothered to hang it on a wall in the fancy frame that your parents had gifted you as a graduation present.

You looked at the oven clock. 10 P.M. You tipped your head back and drained the coffee in your mug. The graveyard shift at the hospital started soon. Getting through the shift was difficult. It always was. You had a couple of...interesting patients. You really did your best not to think negatively about patients. They were all going through an unpleasant experience--sometimes even in life-threatening conditions. But that didn't mean the job couldn't be frustrating.

That particular night, one old man decided to argue with you all shift. No, he wouldn't take his pills. No, he wouldn't let you change the IV. No, he wouldn't eat his meal. Most of these statements also involved a derogatory term. You did your best to ignore them.

Meanwhile, another patient would not stop ringing the bell. She wanted another blanket. Then she wanted a chocolate bar (which she wasn't allowed). Then she wanted her dog (which, per the woman's daughter, the old woman did not even own a dog). There would be a therapy dog at the hospital later in the morning so you made sure to leave a request to stop by the woman's room.

As you were about to go home at the end of your shift, your supervisor called you into her office and asked you to stay another hour or two since the unit was short staffed. You wanted nothing more than to go lie down in your bed at home but you didn't feel like you had a choice. You agreed and your supervisor proceeded to tell you three things you had done incorrectly on your last shift. Great.

The Nurse continued

When you finally arrived home you wondered what all that hard work in school was for--just to be yelled at, argued with, and disrespected. Each morning you came home exhausted, frustrated, and with the everlasting feeling that you didn't really belong--because if you did, wouldn't everyone respect you? Wouldn't your job be easier? Somehow, work wasn't even the worst part. The loneliness weighed on you like a hundred pound chain.

The only time the loneliness waned was when your sister came to visit. She was still in college, back in Chicago. Every few weeks she would come stay with you for the weekend. Work didn't seem so difficult then, living far away from your family became less isolating. You could forget the ache that sank into the bottom of your heart and just feel joy. The shopping trips, the adventures at the arcades, and the walks through the woods filled the void that you'd become.

Each time that you drove your sister to the station for her return train home, tears would roll down your face.

"What's wrong?" she would ask.

"I'm just going to miss you. That's all," you had responded the first few times. But eventually your sister knew that the issue ran deeper.

"I feel so alone," you eventually admitted. "My apartment is so lonely, so empty. It's not very big but it feels massive when it's just me. I don't have friends to invite over. I don't even have anyone to talk to at work. I see other people out with their groups of friends and I want that too, but it seems impossible."

Your sister reached across the console and patted your back. When you parked the car, she got out and gave you the biggest hug that wrapped you in warmth. The next time she came to visit, she brought you a cat.

The cat was all black except its front left paw which was white. You named her Luna. With Luna around things got a little better. The apartment wasn't quite so lonely and each time you looked at Luna, you remembered that someone out there loved you. It gave you a little more confidence. A little more confidence that maybe other people in the world could love you, too.

That bit of hope was the spark you needed. You started to say hi to your neighbors. Little steps, you thought. But one neighbor in particular seemed quite responsive to your greetings which quickly led to small talk which turned into deeper conversations. Noelle lived with her boyfriend and they had recently moved to town as well. Noelle worked at a car company in their marketing department. She had long, curly, dark hair that draped over her shoulders like a veil and she always smiled with her whole face. You found it endearing.

Noelle seemed happy with her job, with her relationship. She looked put together even when she just ran out to grab the mail from the mailbox. You wanted to be like Noelle when you grew up. Slowly, the conversations at the mailbox evolved into talks while on strolls in the nearby park and you even met her and her boyfriend for dinner once. Things seemed to be looking up, until they crashed back down.

One shift, you lost a patient; you came home heartbroken. You couldn't stop crying--you'd never lost a patient before and it felt like the world was collapsing. You could not possibly return to work, you could never go through this again. The devastated faces of the patient's loved ones imprinted in your brain.

You drove home but sat frozen in your car. You sat there and wept. And wept. Breathing became a foreign task as you gasped for air in between sobs. A knock on the car window startled you. You quickly wiped your face, not that it mattered. The aftermath of your heartache could not be hidden. You rolled down the window.

Are you okay?" Noelle asked.

You told her what had happened.

"I'm so sorry," Noelle said. "Come on, let's get you inside."

Noelle looped her arm through yours and walked you up to your door. She led you inside and immediately to your couch. She grabbed a nearby blanket and draped it over you. Luna jumped onto the couch and curled up at your feet.

"I'll be back in ten minutes," she said and rushed out of the apartment.

With her gone, your crying resumed. Each tear that rolled down your face left a scar on your soul. You would never be the same again. How could you possibly continue on with a job that could have such a terrible outcome?

You almost forgot that Noelle had said she'd be back when you heard the door open. You couldn't help but feel a bit of relief and hoped she would stay for a while; you didn't want to be alone. Noelle stood in the door frame holding a mug in one hand and a massive tote bag in the other.

"Here's some peppermint tea," she said and handed you the mug. "I was going to make carbonara for dinner if you'd like to eat with us. And if you don't mind me using your kitchen, I can make it here and keep you company."

"Thank you. I'd appreciate that," you said weakly but your heart felt so full.

Noelle got to work right away and occasionally checked in on you. Eventually you went to the kitchen to see if you could help. Noelle refused but you sat at the table. You watched Noelle rush around the kitchen--asking you where something was every now and then. She prepared garlic bread and had even made chocolate chip cookie dough, which was chilling in the fridge.

"How are you so on top of things?" you asked in awe. "You brought all this over on short notice, I couldn't have done that and this is my kitchen."

Noelle let out a little laugh. "Well, I do love to cook. But I certainly would not describe myself as on top of things."

You eyed her suspiciously.

"You have me fooled. You always seem to know what you're doing. I never know what I'm doing..." you trailed off.

Noelle, looked at you amused. "I'll let you in on a secret, no one does. Not really, anyway. Even the best laid plans go awry...or something like that. Don't be so hard on yourself."

"You seem happy, though," you responded.

"I am, generally. I do things that I enjoy, like visiting friends and going dancing. I have a wonderful boyfriend--but I'm stuck in a career I don't want and I'm not sure how to get out of it or even what I want to do next. But, I don't let that stop me from living my life."

You digested that for a moment. Had you been going about life all wrong? Focusing on the wrong things? Just then--a knock on the door. Nick, Noelle's boyfriend, walked in carrying a bouquet of flowers.

"I'm so sorry about your patient," he said and gave you a hug.

You couldn't help it--you started crying again but somehow it didn't feel awkward in front of them.

A bit later, you, Noelle, and Nick sat down to eat. Although you didn't have much of an appetite, the food was delicious. And you definitely ate several chocolate chip cookies.

As you sat there, a little dazed from the events of your day, Luna on your lap, Noelle and Nick by your side, your despair shifted. A few pounds had dropped from that chain. You had hope. Your heart remained broken for your patient but there were more patients that you could help. And helping them didn't mean you had to be the perfect nurse. Maybe it was okay that you didn't have life all figured out. Maybe it was okay that you missed your family. And maybe you could create a new family here. Yes, you thought, you didn't have to face it all alone.

Nicole Saez

Nicole grew up in Northville with a passion for reading and writing. She is the author of *The Best Four Years*. When she's not writing, she's most likely roller skating.

The Shed

Artwork - Gouache on paper



Carl Stephens

I am a lifelong resident of Northville and a Northville High graduate. I received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Eastern Michigan University.



Mutsuko Verzemnieks

Born in Japan, recently published a children's book named *Kumako*.

Gazing
down in shame.

Solitary
among trees towering over
monuments to what has been
lost, shedding
leaves like tears.

Eroded by estrangement
she pours regret

out a jug
of excuses
into a river
stone hardened
by a drought
of amends
until she empties
all hope
of reunion.

Drowning
the last remains of motherhood.

Jennifer Yohe

After an absence of many years, Jennifer recently returned to writing by taking the Art Through Words course at the Northville Art House. She loved using art to inspire her writing and even began to appreciate writing poetry for the first time. These days, she enjoys writing poems in coffee shops and attending the monthly Rise & Write Northville poetry group.

