

2026 TMA Poetry Prize

1st Place, Youth Category

Vanessa Loveridge

Arcadia Local Schools

Herbarium for Monokeros

Inspired by a tapestry with wild woman riding a unicorn

In woodlands stitched from breath and borrowed time
Leaves archive memory the way bark keeps rings
Every footprint held, never lost
Green unfurls in relentless variation
No single hue ascending, but thousands leaning inward
Trading light, trading shadow
Gathered in one slow, breathing body

Berries swell in their own slow devotion
Ripening without urgency or end
Birds pause mid-air, suspended
Between intonation and song
The atmosphere itself feels woven
Drawn tight with patience
Loosened just enough for meaning to pass through

A symbol of grace passes soundlessly here
Not announced, not pursued
It moved among roots, stems, and opening blooms
Its fleece pale as flowers pressed between pages
It's the quiet gold of dried chamomile
Sun-warmed, gently fading, never lost

Nothing in this place is seized
Nothing is diminished by being seen
This is not a forest of capture, but of careful tending
Where purity is allowed to grow untrimmed and unafraid
Forever at home.