

2026 TMA Poetry Prize

1st Place, Adult Category

Kate Michaelson

Ottawa Hills, Ohio

The Tapestry Weaver Dreams

Inspired by a tapestry with wild woman riding a unicorn

It's not the wild woman who comes to me in sleep, but the unicorn who sings from woven woods. Her language favors magic over sense—choruses of breathing leaves, refrains of stony brooks, other songs of which I know no like.

Days of twining wool and silk have formed her mouth, granted her the gift of sound. Snugged shoulder to shoulder before the loom, we—the weavers—pass the weft over, under, over the warp. Again, again. We cut and join, merging threads invisibly each time the color shifts. The hours blend, long and short as waves of light. Until—

at dusk, I wake, returned to my mouse's home of grays and browns, my eldest's toes poking at his shoes, my girl sighing at her fraying skirt. The blue-black cold presses at our bones, but I warm my young with songs of roiling brooks and breathing trees.

Next morning I'll return to weave
my love the kind of yellow eyes that gaze upon a lion without fear.
No snowy, docile unicorn—ours bares jagged teeth, defending all that's wild.
No symbolic being; ours, herself, is meaning.

A few fools snicker at her bearded face, her camel's feet. I ask, *Which of you has seen a living unicorn?* Now, they hold their tongues and with each length of thread, cast their own enchantment. Over, under, cut and join. We weave as one seams of gold, a dozen greens. Pheasants, flowers, berries, hares, we summon to our loom. Arms burning and fingers raw, we twine our skin, our blood into the tapestry, breathing with the trees. Over, under, cut and join. We weave as one
this world where, forever, we will live—blooming and untamed.