

Wild Flower

GROW INSPIRED

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Candy Hearts

By Kristen DeAnn

My feelings about Valentine's Day have evolved over the years. When I was a kid, I made "Valentine mailboxes" at school, which were big paper pockets covered with glued-on construction paper hearts and taped to the front of our classroom desks. I loved bringing tiny valentines and "delivering" them to all my classmates. I also loved getting notes in return and... candy! Unfortunately, I had a difficult time pacing myself in consuming the candy hearts I received in my special mailbox. One time, I overindulged and ate an entire box within a span of just a few minutes. And I paid dearly for it later. For a few years after that regrettable decision, the very mention of Valentine's Day would make me feel queasy.

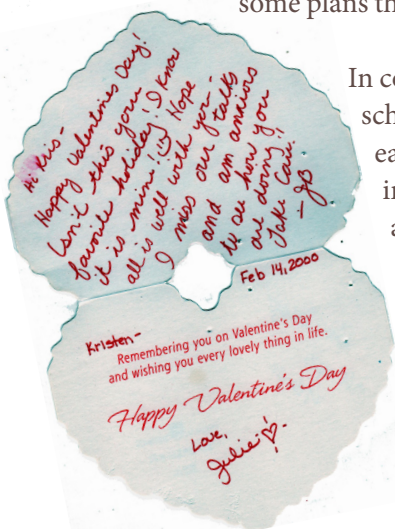
I can't say that my Valentine's Day-triggered nausea ever vanished completely, especially in high school, because in that realm, Valentine's Day was pretty much singles awareness day for the unattached. Lots of couples exchanged mushy cards, stuffed animals, and flowers, while others watched from the sidelines. My junior year, as a leader in ASB, I helped plan and host a Valentine's Day spaghetti dinner date night. I'll admit it was a successful event. And at least I had some plans that night. Better to spend it with a bunch of moon-eyed couples than to sit home alone.

In college, Valentine's Day activities among couples played out much as it did in high school, only at this point there was the possibility of someone getting engaged. It was easy to feel insignificant and overlooked on February 14. But one year I found a package in my university mailbox. I opened it to find that my parents had thoughtfully sent a Valentine's Day care package with a card and cookies to encourage me. It was like unwrapping a big hug. Likewise, my roommate's mom sent her a pair of GAP jeans for Valentine's Day. New jeans! For Valentine's Day! These thoughtful gestures helped me remember that love is shared and felt beyond just romantic emotions. Even after I was out of college but still single, I got a sweet V-day card from a friend who was also unpaired, and it made my day extra special.

"These thoughtful gestures helped me remember that love is shared and felt beyond just romantic emotions."



90s nostalgia: working check-in as hostess at the school Valentine's dinner.



Now, Valentine's Day is about showing my family members how much I love them with PB&J lunch sandwiches cut into heart shapes, pink frosted sugar cookies, and heart-shaped personal pizzas for dinner.

What about you? How do you feel about Valentine's Day? Is it just another commercialized holiday? A painful reminder of a relationship



or lack thereof? A stressful day that requires helping your six-year-old write her name on 35 different classmate cards? Do you have a Valentine, or is it just another day like any other for you?

Welcome back to *Wild Flower*. In this February issue, I hope you'll draw creative inspiration from an interview with artist Michele Liem. Take some time to read and enjoy. ♡



Inspiration: Poetry

Echo

George Garrett

Lost before I spoke, I cast my voice as you might throw a stone, a ball, some flowers from a stair. Catch who dares or cares to. And you shrug.

But stones break bones, the ball must fall, the bride's bouquet hovers an instant and then is torn to pieces. Hands are so crumbling, eater.

Who calls me? Naked, I crouch in caves, pray in hollow places, hurl back myself like fistful coins. True lovers, good riders, aren't so easy thrown. *Who calls my name?*

Poetry Southeast, 1968

Valentine

Carol Ann Duffy

Not a red rose or a satin heart.

I give you an onion.
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.
It promises light
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.
It will blind you with tears
like a lover.
It will make your reflection
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are.

Take it.
Its platinum loops shrink to a
wedding-ring
if you like.

Lethal.
Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.

Poems about Emotions, 2014

Until I Thought Of Myself As The Sea

@hannahrowrites

I used to separate good days from bad until I thought of myself as an ocean.

I used to slice times I felt strong from when I felt weak until I imagined myself as the sea.

Calm and rocky, wild and soft, still and powerful and vast and more than any one thing.

In the ocean, it's hard to divorce one mood from another, one wave from the next.

Now, on my worst days I think how good life is too, how I still can greet joy while swimming through grief.

How fragile strength sometimes feels. How I'm not any one thing in any one moment on any one day.

I'm all of it and all of it is me. ♡

Wild Flower is a monthly publication featuring writing, interviews, stories, designs, observations, recommendations, encouragement and reflections on faith and creativity.

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Spotlight on artist Michele Liem

Tell us a little about your yourself.

My name is Michele Liem, and I live in Yorba Linda. I've been providing children's art classes for 21 years. I teach more than 180 students every week.

Where did you find inspiration for creativity when you were younger, and where do you find it now?

Inspiration finds me when I am being present in the moment. There's so much to notice and to see, to be excited about. People inspire me, conversations, other people's ideas. I took classes, and there were a handful of people who have sparked my interest over the years.

When I was two or three, I wanted to color with crayons all the time. Art is how God made me. My grandma was very artistic. I would go over to my grandma's house and do "art" with her. We'd make a doll out of hand soap, for example. My dad would also sit and draw and paint with me for hours. I thought he was the best artist ever.

In high school, I took art classes from a lady

who taught out of her garage. I got a scholarship and later graduated from art school. I began by focusing on drawing, but now it's more painting. I'm comfortable with both forms of expression.

I'm also inspired by my animals. I have Stormy, a ten-year-old Chug who is my 'good child,' and I have Finn, a German Shepherd, and he gets into trouble easily.

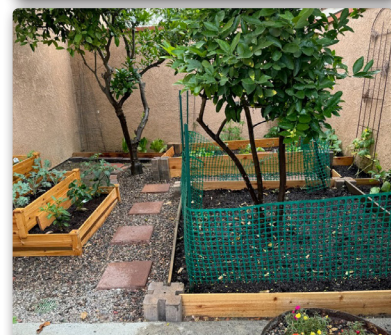
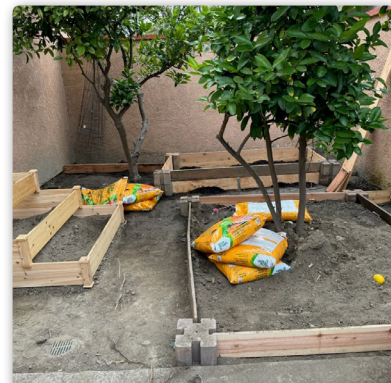
What sorts of things inspire you in the everyday?

What inspires me changes as the years go by. Artists have different inspirations and projects. As summer approaches, I like to pick a spiritual project that I will focus upon for three months. This past year I decided it would be prayer. It's a personal thing. And it has taken me on the most beautiful journey. A year into it, I'm so blessed by prayer.

I grew a vegetable garden last summer that produced all sorts of veggies.



A commissioned work by Michele depicting a blue gate at a home in Pebble Beach.



Before and after: Michele's garden

Continued on page 4



Michele's Mediterranean Dip

Ingredients:

1 cup feta cheese	2 chopped cucumbers
1/2 cup olives	1/2 cup capers
1 cup sun dried tomatoes	2 chopped green onions
1 12 oz jar artichoke hearts	2 chopped Roma tomatoes

Chop all ingredients and add together except Feta cheese (add feta closer to serving time). Can be prepared a day ahead of time.

Cream Cheese Base Ingredients:

8 oz Cream Cheese	1 tablespoon Italian parsley
1 clove garlic	1 teaspoon thyme
1 tablespoon basil	

Tip: let cream cheese soften before mixing in other ingredients.

I love that I picked everything for the week's meals out of my garden—it was so cool to be farm-to-table. As a new gardener, I learned a lot about things I did wrong, and I want to improve. But overall, the project was inspiring and cathartic.

I work out five days a week. I enjoy my day when exercise is factored into my schedule.

Any projects you're working on currently?

One project I'm working on now is refinishing the furniture in my daughter's old bedroom. She graduated from UC Berkeley and moved to Sacramento, so I wanted to change



Before and after: Michele's furniture refinishing project

her brightly colored room into a quiet room. I refinished the furniture and painted the walls. I have a collection of vinyl albums, big vintage speakers, and a stereo receiver that I've set up in the room. I love music. It's a big part of my day. I like orchestral music for prayer time. During art classes with my students, the music I play varies between rock, blues and reggae. I like Slightly Stoopid, Sublime, and sometimes Billy Holiday.

I do get commissioned projects. One client has a home in Pebble Beach with a beautiful, blue wooden gate surrounded bougainvillea, and I was asked to capture it in a painting. A lot of

people also hire me to paint portraits of their pets.

How do you nurture creativity?

Sometimes I go through seasons of being blocked, and good or bad, there's beauty and purpose in all of it. I usually read and do something different for a while to recharge.

Is there a spiritual dimension to your creativity, and how does your faith play a role?

My paintings are very much drawn from a spiritual basis and foundation. My pieces are conceptual. The viewer isn't always looking at simply a "boat," or a "sunset," for example. Different things all tie together, and they are spiritual

in nature. I also draw inspiration through pondering Scripture—the Bible—and that leads to discovery.

Do you have any other hobbies?

I'm in a bi-monthly intercessory prayer group, which is engaging in prayer on behalf of others and for current events. We have two leaders who structure it so that we pray in a group and then on our own.

What are you reading these days?

I love reading historical fiction. There's a book series by **Alyssa Maxwell** called the **Gilded Newport Mysteries**, and I'm on book four, *A Murderous Marriage*. The story setting involves families and characters modeled after famous wealthy industrialists in the early 1900s. I'm also reading *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools* by Tyler Staten. I highly recommend listening to it as an audio book. ♡

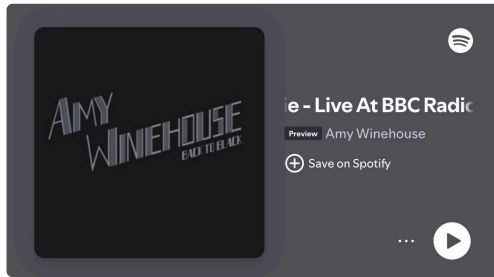
Keep scrolling to read Michele's music and shopping recommendations!



"Pearls," another work by Michele

Recommended Listen: Amy Winehouse's "Valerie"

Recommended by Michele, this Amy Winehouse song has a soulful bluesy sound that offers just the right blend of verve and melancholy. Have a listen. ♪



Shopping: Mercado Gonzales

Michele's not much of a shopper, but she does recommend visiting the **Northgate Marketplace (Mercado Gonzales) in Costa Mesa**. She says it's so fun, you have to go! The **large indoor market** includes food vendors, a marketplace for specialty meats, and booths selling handmade soaps, flowers, jewelry, and art. Live bands and folklórico groups give performances, too, especially on weekends. It gets busy on Saturdays, so time your visit carefully! Expert tip: grab some authentic churros and horchata. **Here's a video** of how it looks inside!

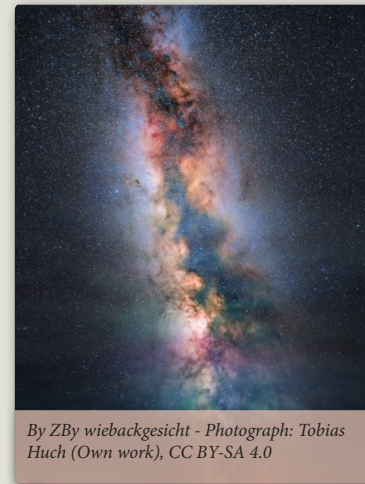
Also: Bohtieque Design

Julie at **Bohtieque Design** creates beautiful personalized labels and stationery. I've been ordering return address labels from her for years. Her **custom note cards** are perfect for gifts—especially as housewarming presents. And these **school labels** are adorable. She even designed a label that I requested featuring **magnolia flowers** for my daughter, whose middle name is Magnolia. Check out these Valentine-worthy **"key to my heart"** labels! If you order from Julie, please tell her I sent you! ♪

Jewelry: Annalis handmade minimalist gemstones

I'm a minimalist girl. I love tiny gemstones and a subtle look (except for a statement turquoise cuff!).

Annalis Jewelry is one of my very favorite places to find just the right piece. I especially love this **turquoise silver tiny heart necklace**. Annalis uses sterling silver and quality stones for all her work, and many pieces can be personalized! Along with bridal jewelry, she also has a whole section of solid gold earrings and necklaces. She's got a sale section, too. If you make a purchase, please tell her I sent you. She's located in Tel Aviv, and orders take a little extra time to arrive, so plan ahead! ♪



By ZBy wiebackgesicht - Photograph: Tobias Huch (Own work), CC BY-SA 4.0



By Hartmut Schmidt Heidelberg - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0

The End: Until Next Time



I hope you've enjoyed this special Valentine's Day issue of *WildFlower*. I plan to be back next month with an interview with someone I find particularly generous and inspiring, as well as some original essays, writings, and inspiration. If you'd like to submit content or ideas, please reach out to editor@wildflowerjournal.com. ♪