

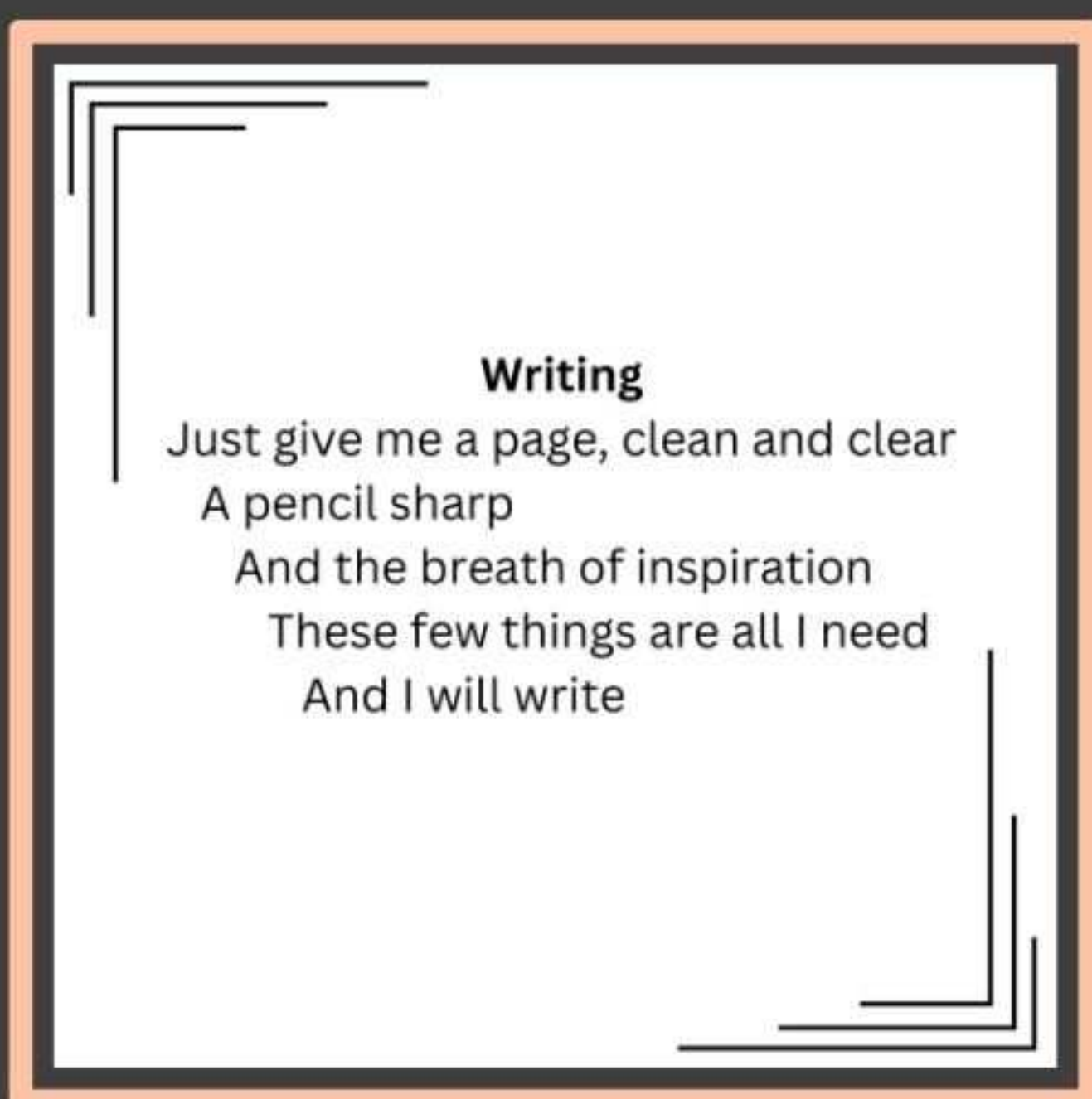


Needlepoint

The blanketing cloud banks cliff-like
 In the dawn
 Investing its silver coating in the air
 As clouds often do
 With bare feet in moist cut-grass socks
 I crouch under the shade trees
 And I gather sweet and sour blackberries
 On the tip of my needle
 Hiding them in my pockets
 Until they bleed stain
 Into my empty lap
 To match
 The darkest morning in the year

The day you left me

Alone



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Jemma Leech



How does compassion inform your art?

Compassion gives art to artists. Without compassion, without the humanity that comes from our caring for and about others, art is nothing but a daub on a surface, a nonsensical gesture, or a vibration through air. Pointless and dull. I center compassion in all that I write so that I can bear witness in our lives and our world.

Jemma Leech is a British/Texan poet and essayist who lives in Houston. While she speaks from the perspective of someone with cerebral palsy, she also celebrates nature and the intimacy of human relationships. She has been featured in the Houston Chronicle, The Times, the Times Educational Supplement and on ABC News. She has given readings of her poetry through Inprint, the Houston Public Library and Public Poetry Houston, and is featured in an anthology of writings about her birthplace, called *CityLit: London* (Oxygen Books). She was awarded The Sammy Award by The River Performing and Visual Arts Center in 2008 for her work in spreading awareness of the abilities of

people with disabilities, and in 2012, Jemma was invited to be part of the Inauguration of Houston's Mayor, Annise Parker, where her poem, *I Have a Dream*, was read as the Inaugural Poem. Six of her poems have been set to music by composer, Mary Carol Warwick, to create a cycle for soprano, viola, oboe and piano, entitled *Jemma Songs*. The piece was premiered by The Greenbriar Consortium, and has been performed several times since, and was adapted as a dance piece with choreography by Deborah Quanaim. Jemma has studied under a number of exceptional writers—including several of Houston's Poets Laureate—through Writers in the Schools' and Inprint's workshop programs.

Finalist
 Artist of the Year 2022

COMPASSION
 Through The ARTS



WWW.JEMMALEECH.COM

