



Michelle Jayne is a middle-aged, middle class, middle manager of average height and IQ. She is a veteran and introverted community activist. She has a useless degree in Soviet and East European Studies from the University of Iowa and the M of her MA in Russian Linguistics, because she kept falling asleep during class and didn't want to take such expensive naps.

She currently lives in a suburb of Minneapolis with her husband, daughter, and disagreeable cats. She is working on a first novel, [Children of the Fragile Air](#) and writes for her aging blog *The Green Study* at [www.thegreenstudy.com](http://www.thegreenstudy.com).

“We – this ragtag group of ten or twelve - are going to become a single organism. A collective unconscious. We are going to set aside our petty concerns and focus, instead, on the sentences in front of us. We will train our *best selves*- our empathetic understanding, our optimism, our critical eye – to understand what each of us is trying to do. We are going to laugh, possibly cry, argue, roll our eyes. But we're going to do it with respect, and even with love.

This love is a strange alchemy of mutual recognition. We are, each one of us, wrestling with words, with our futile stabs at some kind of human eloquence. We are solitary by nature but we have chosen to come together because the page benefits from the eyes of others. Because we are unable to see our own work clearly. Because we have developed connections and metaphors that are unknowable to us until someone else switches the lights on. We come to the workshop table – even the most defensive and cynical among us - in an act of faith. *See me, we are saying. See beneath my words to the truer words that rush in a river beneath. Plunge your hands into this river. Show me what I have done.*”

**Dani Shapiro, Still Writing, 2013**