

For Those Who Never Clock Out

by: Ruby Anne Sapitan

For those who never clock out,
My father worked by the road –
hands stained with grease and distance,
driving through dawns and midnights,
engines humming like promises he kept.

He fixed what was broken –
Trucks, tools, tired parts
even when no one saw
the cost it took from his breath.

Work never retired him.
Even when the calendar said stop,
his hands still reached for purpose,
his heart still clocked in.

My mother worked quietly.
Before “home” became her job,
she cleaned other people’s houses,
cooked meals she would never eat,
carried strength in silence.

Now she works in a different way –
Measuring time by medicine schedules,
listening to each breath,
loving through long nights of worry.

Work has changed its shape,
but never its meaning.

I work by lesson plans and questions,
teaching futures that don’t yet exist,
preparing minds for jobs unnamed,
for worlds still loading.

I tell my students that work is more
than a paycheck,
more than a title.

It is showing up.
It is staying, even when the body is tired.
It is loving through labor
no one applauds.

The past taught us endurance.
The present asks for adaptability.
The future will demand compassion.

And when the world asks what work has
become,
I think of my parents –
who taught me that the greatest labor
is not what we build,
but who we care for
when the work is hardest.

***P.S. Dedicated to my parents, whose love
and labor never clock out.***