



SPARK

A REVIEW OF NSCC STUDENT LITERARY & ARTISTIC EXPRESSION



SPARK 2009 **volume 1**

sparked by inspiration

Through poetry and stories, photographs and drawings, Spark showcases the talent and spirit of students at North Shore Community College. The inaugural issue of Spark is dedicated to the intrepid souls who keep the flame of art and literature white hot—you know who you are. And now, thanks to Spark, everyone else will, too. **Enjoy.**

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Becoming one in itself

by **Maryvett Tello**

Eerie sounds lurking
In the air....
Vibrations of the sounds
Bouncing off the walls.
Echoes of screams
Traveling in my ears.
I hear a pattern, a medley
Of a girl's calls.
I'm stuck all alone
In the darkness of the past.
There's a segregation
Between myself and the truth.
There's a path of dark
Shadows trying to get
Out of the black fast.
Releasing its colors, one by one.
Becoming one person in itself.
That one person is me.
Spreading my true colors
Out onto the grounds of life.

I love when you walk by

by **Alexandra Selman**

I love when you walk by
I touch you I reach out and rip off your skin
Take it home with me and I play with it
I throw it around
Syringes comfort me
The wind blows and my organs bleed
Awake all day
Dreams elapsed
I walk alone with my heart in my hand and my
mind in the ocean
Moist thoughts and wet eyelashes
Behind them the sleepless dream
Where is that safe forest
I want to go?

Break

by **Maryvett Tello**

Reflection
Eye to eye, confusion.
Blood rushing through
Veins of dark skies.
No stars, no moon.
Just the world spinning
On its repulsive atmosphere.
Nature taking its course.
Crack by crack.
Freedom wanting spirits
Fly through.
In and out of passageways.
Seeking for closure.
Overt wounds,
That are bleeding.
Dreadful screams.
Invisible partners...
Come rescue me.

Sebastian Sand

by Sherri Raftery, M. Ed.

Footprints decorating
White sand,
Seashells surfing
On aqua water,
Settling down
Across the shore,
Water rippling
Fast, and foamy,
Washing away,
Stealing the décor,
Laughing heard,
In the distance,
Children running,
All about,
Sun melting away,
The morning dew,
Pales filling,
With ocean's treasures,
Memories,
Reminding us,
Of our day,
On Florida's,
Sebastian Sand

Life under water

by Sherri Raftery, M. Ed.

Life under water...
Fish swim, swiftly, by my false, fins,
Guppy's, gills, gulling, in the gallows,
Porpoises, pulsating, and propelling,

Dolphins, dipping and diving,
Migrating, minnows, meandering,
Kips, kicking, kelp,
Starfish, spinning, and spooling,

My body aches like a sting from a jellyfish...
It cuts my heart, like a sharp edge, of an eel's bite...

To discover a starfish, clinging to a rock,
With its vacuum like, suction cups,
It's a jester, in disguise; you long to own it...

But to keep it, means to end its life...
To take it from its natural surroundings...

...Like an unwanted child, from its biological
home...

Blank pages

by Alexandra Selman

Blank pages make my thoughts gallop
A new life starts the second the ink bleeds
Holes in my veins from all the false truths
Penetrate my mind and lubricate my soul
Not with poison...with orchids
I used to have a home that wasn't a house at all
Illusion was consolation
The ache was the reality
Although I was not convinced
The feeding lie of fantasy

More Than a Scar

by Danielle DiCarlo

“It will be a very small scar, you can wear a bracelet and no one will even notice.” I didn’t realize the doctor’s lies would impact my life through my developing years and even as a young adult. I don’t know of any bracelet that can cover a six inch long scar down the length of a forearm. My self-esteem, confidence, and care-free attitude were shattered by the truth. I have since learned not to let my imperfections bring my confidence down, but at the time I couldn’t help the way a massive, hideous, deformity made me feel. I was about ten years old and my family and I were living in Woburn, Massachusetts. And while some of our most memorable moments happened there in Woburn, sadly, the most traumatic events of my life took place there also.

I was badly injured right in our back yard. My younger sister, Brianna, and I were playing “Monkey in the Middle” with a few kids from our neighborhood. This is a silly game in which a few people sit on top of the monkey bars then the person who is “it” taps the other person’s feet and then that individual is out of the game. Kyle, a scrawny, frail little twit, was enraged that he was “it.” Filled with his jealousy, he wrapped his boney fingers

around my ankles while I sat on the monkey bars and pulled me to the ground. I fell backwards and landed on my left arm. As I was trying to pick myself up, I kept falling down; I was in excruciating pain, could not stop crying, and my bone was protruding through my skin. With my mother I was taken to the hospital by an ambulance. After all these years I still remember that day like it was yesterday. At the hospital, the doctors told me there was too much pressure on my wrist, and I would need surgery. Thoughts of being under the knife, like a bad episode of E.R., flooded my mind. I could only imagine more blood and more pain – and I wasn’t a fan of either, to say the least. I was physically and emotionally scarred. It would take me years to come to terms with my scar and how it changed my personality. I thought when people would look at me, the first thing they would notice was my scar, think less of me or not want to be my friend. It made me more self-conscious.

I remember how I was before I got hurt. I was a happy-go-lucky child, had a lot of confidence, and I always wanted to be the center of attention. However, after my injury, all this changed. My family and I had to move to a new home in Stoneham.

I was forced to adjust to a new school. I remember the first thing that one of the kids in my class said to me. “What happened to you? Did you try to kill yourself?” I was so hurt by this person’s comment that I still remember it to this day. How could I gain my confidence back when people in school were making these comments? They created the emotional shell that I crawled into, which kept me self-conscious and unhappy. Going to this new school was very hard for me; I was unable to make friends, and always felt like an outcast; I was afraid to speak up or even stand up for myself. I felt like jumping out of my skin and running back to my old school in Woburn, where my friends accepted me and would never make me feel like an outsider. As I got older, I began to realize that I should not let people bring me down, and that the only way I would be happy was to be comfortable in my own skin.

I finally started to realize that in order to feel confident and happy, I must be happy with myself. Feeling down showed other people my weakness, and I realized that this was not a healthy way of living. As I grew into a young adult I became more comfortable with myself. I showed

this by listening more in class and not being afraid to participate. I remember not too long ago when I would not even want my teacher to look at me. I feared the thought of speaking in front of the class. I tried to conquer my fear. I think getting my first job at 'Dunkin Donuts' at sixteen years old also increased my confidence. It was a different environment; I wasn't just sitting at home wallowing in self-pity. I was out there trying to make some money but at the same time meeting new people and becoming more independent. I also realized that life is messy, no one is perfect, there are people in this world that aren't as lucky as some of us, and sometimes we take what we have for granted.

After battling with self-esteem issues nearly my whole life, I started to see the world differently. I realized the important things in my life are my family, loved ones, our happiness and most importantly our health. There are so many people who aren't fortunate enough to have close relationships with their families like I do. We laugh together, cry together, and share moments that no one can take away. My family and I are in good health. So why have I been so insecure all these years? Why did I fret about such an insignificant fixation that was not life-threatening? I have flaws, no one is perfect, and we should be thankful for what we do have. I spent too much time feeling abnormal, when I was just unique. If everyone were the same the world would be an extremely boring place. The lesson that I learned is simple, though it took far too long for me to realize: my happiness is my own.

The lesson that I learned is simple, though it took far too long for me to realize: my happiness is my own.

I love you the yellowest

by Sherri Raftery, M. Ed.

I love you the yellowiest, Sabrina, like
A soft petal, from a GIANT SUNFLOWER,

Like the golden, blond, highlights,
Of a spinning, prima ballerina,

I love you as sweet, as the honey,
That drips, from a honeycomb,

I love you as sharp,
As, a yellow jacket's sting,

I love you as wide,
As, the tallest cornfield,

I love you as bright,
As, a firefly at night,

I love you
As warm as, the sun,

With all my
MIGHT!

Love,
MAMA

An Unusual Morning

by George Baker

I feel as though
I was placed
into someone
else's life,
and all I am
able to do is try
and figure out
how to live it.

As I labor to open my eyes, I don't know why I feel more exhausted than I can remember. Immediately, I begin to realize that something is not right. Sunlight bursts in from the window onto my face, and I feel the overwhelming heat that has been forming underneath my heavy coat since the sun ascended into the early morning sky.

There is something missing. I do not recognize my surroundings, nor do I feel any sense of purpose for the day, or any part of my life. I impatiently try and wait for my mind to snap back to normal, and my focus to return to some kind of illuminating, lucid reality. Only one thing I have realized for sure at this moment. My memory is gone.

Terror strikes me as I cannot figure out even who I am. I frantically look around the room to see if something is familiar to me. Anything at all. I am in a room with yellowish walls, a twin size bed, and two large windows that are open, letting in the brisk morning air. White curtains flow inward from the breeze, as flickering sunspots dance around the room. Nothing feels like my own. I feel as though I was placed into someone else's life, and all I am able to do is try and figure out how to live it.

I plunge my head out the window, clumsily almost falling what looked like two or three stories onto the busy street below. What I see around me remains a mystery. The traffic, the pedestrians—they flood the city like insects infest the woods. But where am I? What is this place?

I sit for a while, thinking about what is still with me in my memories, if anything. Finally, after scratching an itch on my side, something begins to unscramble. The clouds start to lift and things are taking form again in my head. I know what I am feeling is important because everything inside of me is telling me to focus on this one thing.

Directly in my line of sight a young lady appears, walking toward me with something in her hand and a big smile on her face. When I see that she has fixed me a nice looking meal, my memory is finally restored.

My puppy food is ready and then I get to go out and run as fast as I can with my other doggy friends and maybe even find a new toy to play with. It's gonna be so much fun. How could I have forgotten? I think to myself as I vehemently wag my tail. Excitement awaits.



art gallery

clockwise

Fallen angel | *Jonathan Cwiok*

Friendship | *Nicole Gibson*

Beach seagulls | *Victoria Robin*







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A summer's dream | *Hillary Scott*

Sketch of fireplace | *Olesea Fiodorova*

Wedding dress | *Stephanie Mirabello*

Golden dress | *Stephanie Mirabello*

right to left, page 9

Grandmother | *Olesea Fiodorova*

Rose | *Victoria Robin*





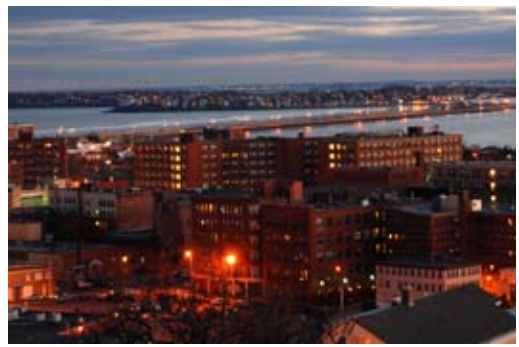
clockwise

At least they're using it | *Levi Camacho*

Red berries | *Victoria Robin*

Water through grass | *Victoria Robin*

Wooden siding | *Nicole Gibson*



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Swanboats 2 | *Victoria Robin*

Causeway | *Carolyn Hoy*

Across the docks | *Nicole Gibson*

Flax in fall | *Victoria Nickerson*

Climbing vines | *Nicole Gibson*

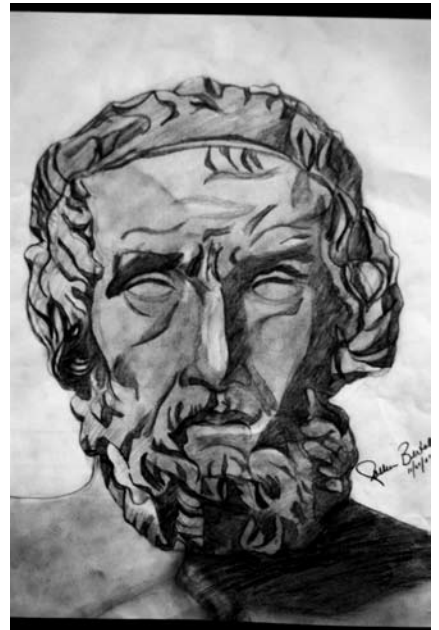
clockwise, page 13

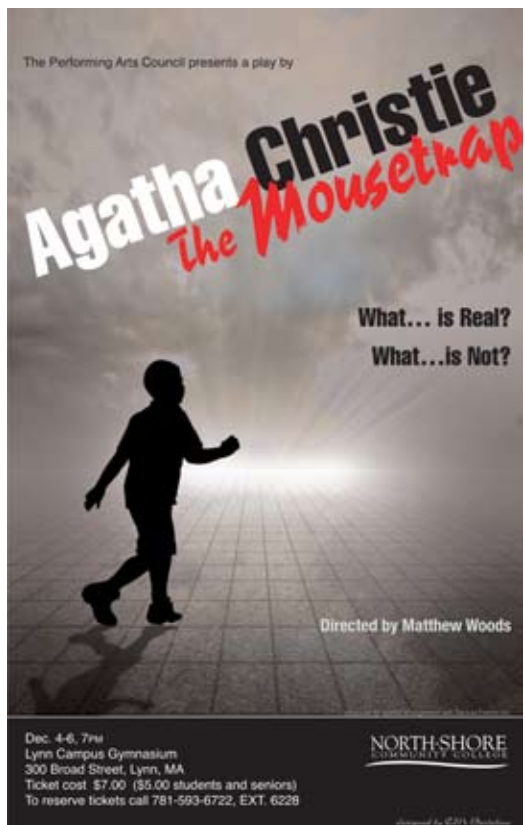
Jack o' lanterns | *Jonathan Cwiok*

Dogs on street | *Levi Camacho*

If only time can pause | *Levi Camacho*

Bargue study | *Colleen Bertolino*





clockwise

Miniature painting on the easel | *Olesea Fiodorova*

Evil in the forest | *Hillary Scott*

Mousetrap | *Colleen Bertolino*

Refraction

by Jonathan Cwiok

At Two Ay Em, another chunk of life wasted
trying to leave consciousness for a temporary land
of contemporary refuge. Sleep, so many take for granted
and here I am trying to get a little piece
of rest while my mind wanders the planes
for want of purpose, for lack
of reason. Four hours to go
with reddened eyes and clouded thoughts, devoid
of any sense of the world watching
and judging my condition the next day. Sick
or just tired? How about tired of being sick tonight
begging for medication from that fucking sandman. Crazy
to think of how a shift in perspective can warp this world before me and leave me
begging for medication from that fucking sandman. Crazy
or just tired? How about tired of being sick tonight
and judging my condition the next day. Sick
of any sense of the world watching
with reddened eyes and clouded thoughts, devoid
of reason. Four hours to go
for want of purpose, for lack
of rest while my mind wanders the planes
and here I am trying to get a little piece
of contemporary refuge. Sleep, so many take for granted
trying to leave consciousness for a temporary land
At Two Ay Em, another chunk of life wasted
writing a rambling poem instead of getting some sleep.

I've always wanted to be a writer....but....

by Josh Black

I've always wanted to be a writer, but I've always lacked everything it took to be a great one: I haven't really lived enough to have anything real to write about. My father left when I was very little, so I never really had any father-son memories to draw upon. I didn't see my mom a lot, so how could I ask her? I would, however, often dream about what it would be like to have a father around. I would often imagine that he would take me to Bruins games and buy me a hot dog. It would have to be hot dogs specifically because I had seen so many dads buy their sons hot dogs. After a game we would go back home and watch the game on TV to see if we appeared on camera. He would be the guy to write about; he would have been great inspiration. I always wanted my dad to be the guy to teach me how to drive, how to talk to girls, maybe even how to write, but I could never ask him; I had never even met him.

I could never ask my mom for help either; she was so occupied with not being home, constantly leaving me to watch my younger siblings. When she would come home it would be far too late to ask for help, and she usually looked pretty sick. I couldn't ask after school either because she had signed me up for the after-school program. I never got to see my mom much, and when I did she was either sick looking, or too mad to want to talk to me. She would just yell and scream at me until I was too scared or too hurt to want to ask. Eventually I had to move out of my mom's house to live with my grandparents, because of a court order. I had surmised that I would probably never get to ask my mom for help, but how would I know? I wasn't allowed to see her anymore.

I wasn't in touch whatsoever with my parents. How could I draw from life experiences

when my life was virtually taken away from me? I spent the next several years in and out of courtrooms, and not being allowed to see several different family members. In addition to this I was going from school to school, never being able to make friends for any length of time. Every time I would make friends, it seemed that the very next day I was taken out of the class for whatever reason. I thought that I was a normal kid; I would try to be friendly but to no avail. I think it was mostly because I was older than most of the kids in my grade. You see, my mother would constantly be moving us around and therefore I would be missing a lot of school. In 4th grade I was forced to stay back a year and repeat it. This has always bothered me, but the city said that it would be for my best intentions. I felt ashamed going into a new classroom all the time, knowing that these kids hadn't had to stay back a year. They were normal. They had a mom they could see; they had a dad they could see; I began to resent other kids for the unfairness I was given.

That life continued for 4 more years. I was dragged to Essex County Court seemingly every weekend. Sometimes I would see my mom. I didn't know how I felt about this woman who had yelled at me, screamed at me, and eventually would become physically abusive. Tears would roll down my eyes when I caught a glance of her. I was feeling things I couldn't understand; I mean, she was my mother; I loved her terribly with all my being. I was her son; she had to love me, right? I was also afraid of what she would do if she saw me there with my grandparents, and at the same time I hated her. I hated her for hitting me; I hated her for making me stay back; but most of all, I hated her for making me lie.

It was after one particular sickening morning, I had not done my homework the night before and this was something my mother would not accept. I was thrown through a gate we had in the kitchen for keeping the dog out of the bedroom, and broke it. I didn't mean to break it, but I couldn't stop myself having been thrown at a fairly fast speed. The gate was broken because of me and this only caused my mother more anguish. She grabbed my younger sister and pushed her into a table, causing her to get an alarmingly large bruise across her forehead. I cried for her, but this only made my mom angrier. I was pinned down and slapped countless times; this caused my face to redden quickly into a sickly crimson color. I had cried for so long that I had made myself sick. I couldn't talk, I couldn't cry. I just couldn't make my mother any angrier than she was.

When we got to the school my mom walked me to my class, which she had never done before. We got into the class, and everyone commented on how pretty my mom looked, and how much I looked like her. Then they saw my face. The questions came hurriedly; I didn't answer any. I pretended I didn't know what they were talking about. "What marks?" I replied. I didn't want to make my mom angrier so I didn't say anything. While this was all going on, my mom was talking to the teacher. When she went for the door she called for me and I went over to see her. She told me this exactly, word for word: "If anyone asks why your face is red, tell them it's rug burn". I nodded and told myself that I had to do this and my mom wouldn't get angry with me anymore, that it would never happen again if I just lied to everyone. This wasn't the case, however; she would get angry again.

Of course this was not the role model I would want to help me write. I couldn't go up to her at just any point and ask for help; what if what I wanted to write was stupid? Lucky for me, I had found a family member who had showed a lot of love for me just when I needed it, and it was someone I had never actually met: my father.

My father had been given the entire situation from my grandpa. I went over my grandpa's house one day after school and was handed the telephone. I spoke into the receiver and asked "who is this?" and the reply was: "Josh, it's dad". Immediate is not a strong enough word to explain how fast I broke into tears after hearing this. My dad was on the phone; he would come save me! He would love me! He wouldn't get angry with me! We talked for hours that day about anything I wanted. I discovered how much I had in common with this man I had never spoken to. I mentioned my love for all things Star Wars, and he told me of when he saw the movie in theaters when it first came out. We talked about my love for the Bruins and how I would tell people that I wanted him to take me to a game and get me hot dogs. He promised he would; he said nothing would make him happier. I was going to be a normal boy again. I was going to have a parent that loved me. I would no longer have to explain why it was that I lived with my grandparents. I had a dad now, and I was happy.

But dad never followed through with his promise. He had signed a paper years ago virtually giving up all of his parental rights to me. I had come so close to having a daddy. It seemed that I was never going to be normal. I learned to drive, truthfully not very well; I learned to talk to girls, again not very well; and I have never been fully comfortable with something I have written. But it doesn't matter does it? No one would want to read about a kid and his father.

My grandpa had been a large presence in my life through all this. I could talk to him, tell him anything and everything; he was the only semblance of happiness I had. The man would spoil me rotten; he would be the guy I saw on weekends; he became the leader in the many court battles I was being put through against my mother. He gave me courage to do so many things; the most important

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was the ability to write. He would help me sort out my ideas, he would type things out for me, he even went out and bought me numerous notebooks for me to write in. He kept me going through this horrifying process. It was he who treated me like a kid, and that's what I wanted most. Things were getting better; I was doing way better in school, I had started seeing my mother (who had now gone through therapy and many other similar wellness clinics) on a regular basis. Life was looking up for Josh Black because of his loving grandfather. I went to the courthouse again thinking this was another checkup to see how normal I was becoming. I was told however, that I was no longer allowed to see my grandfather. Another family member ripped out of my life. I begged and pleaded but all for nothing. I would have given anything to see that man, even if it was just to say goodbye. My grandfather, Donald K. Black, killed himself a few months later. The man who helped me accomplish so much, took his own life. The man who was able to get me to do the only things I ever wanted to do, was now dead, and I never got to say goodbye. I have no idea what I did with those notebooks, or have any idea what was even written in them, but it doesn't matter, does it? No one would want to read about a kid and his grandfather.

I had moved back in with my mom again; this was my first time living with her in 4 years. Those years had built a wall between us and we became more and more aware of its existence, seemingly on a daily basis. My mom had since given birth to another child while I was away. Initially I thought she had another baby to replace the one she had lost for such a long period of time, but of course, that was just sibling rivalry. Well, according

to my therapist anyway. I didn't particularly enjoy being back at my mom's again. I didn't have any friends, I didn't have any freedoms, and I was constantly at odds with the man she was seeing on and off. I hated the school I went to, I hated the students there, and I hated almost everything about everything. My mom would eventually marry again, and give birth twice more, and it was clear to me I no longer belonged in this household. I don't have any other way of putting this except while living there, I didn't feel like family. I felt like a burden to the house, and to its inhabitants. I didn't want my mom to choose between her husband and me. Who was I to break up a marriage? I took the decision on myself and left. I didn't feel wanted, and didn't want to bother anyone at the house with my existence. I packed up my things and moved back in with my grandparents in Massachusetts.

I got involved with a great group of friends, and decided to get involved with the drama club at my high school. Eventually I met a girl who I have fallen in love with and have figured out a way to talk to her without coming off as a complete idiot. I've done pretty well for a kid who didn't get to be normal, and I think I've become a pretty talented writer. But I still have one problem: I don't have anything to write about. I can't draw from my life because there isn't anything to draw from except pain, hurt, and regret. Those aren't things people want to read. People want to read about overcoming adversity and doing well for themselves in life and who have truly reached happiness! I'm fine now and living a decent life I think, but does it matter? No one would ever want to read about a kid and his life, unless his name is Harry Potter.

Secret Place

by **George Baker**

With my courage at peak...

I walk slowly into the darkness
Shouting voices on every corner
A prostitute asking men to join her
Trash filling the sidewalks
I step between the needles

I don't know for sure why I am here
At 16, most would be overwhelmed with fear
It is my secret place
These downtown streets where so many
have died

I know I don't belong here
Nor at this hour
But this rush I feel never leaves my memories
This forbidden place I cannot erase

I am scared of people, of talking
And I cannot say what I feel
This rage I own is climbing
From other things too
But when I go to this place,
And my heart begins to race

I am the bravest kid in the world

Empty

by **Amy Grzybowski**

Insatiable hunger that hollows me out
Starvation of the spirit inside the body
Silently tears fall from my eyes
Drowning, or so it seems on empty
The hunger consumes my mind
Breathe in to let go
Scattering thoughts are easy to find
I grab hold of the reins
In the dark I can feel sunshine
Hunger swallows me whole
The truth compliments a lie
Breathe out and slowly let yourself go
Go to sleep to awaken in a dream
Insatiable hunger desires the want to feed

Taking me in

by **George Baker**

And the world took me into its arms, deceiving me

A suffocating rapture
Adhering to my lucid incapacities
Leading me... to nowhere

But see, I do
My eyelids have been stapled open
There is no escape from the horror that is at all times...
everywhere

Closed

by Amy Grzybowski

Flashbacks of your arms holding me sound
Holding your shining face in the palms of
my hands
Falling to my knees
I can't breathe, hitting the ground
Those times are lost like grains of sand
I rise from where I fell
No one around
I reach out my cold hands
Silence is the only sound
The love I felt has turned black
I'm stuck on still
Someone please push play
Click Clack the sound of chains choking
my heart
Silly me thinking you would stay
Where did you go?

A sonnet

by Alexandra Selman

I am a bitter tree on a quiet winter day
For i am not in bloom
God created me, to my own dismay
For sometimes i do not believe regardless of the
spiritual womb
I am forgotten when the solstice begins
My beauty is forgotten i do not flourish
I exist with cold lifeless limbs
I miss the re birth and yearn to be nourished
The time will come again as it does every year
I will be the obvious beauty, when cold you
cannot see
God loves me and gives me faith not fear
For god's grace i know i am beautiful i know i
am me
I forgot with the winter that i was green inside
I am a cold tree and in god i confide

Haikus

by Maravanna Chan

Sunrays lingering
Thoughts of warm springtime
feelings
Brisk chill of today

.....

Intense emotions
Of pain sorrow and sadness
Tears of compassion

.....

Cold raindrops dripping
Endlessly on my body
Eternal my soul



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