sparked by inspiration

Through poetry and stories, photographs and drawings, Spark showcases the talent and spirit of students at North Shore Community College. This fifth issue of Spark is dedicated to the persistence of vision, forward movement, and the knowledge that creativity is its own reward. Enjoy.

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on the cover:
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multimedia:
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I. SPARK 2013 Volume 5
Innocence That Never Was

By Beatrice Varga

White fence, black berries, laughter …
Childhood dreams. What are they?
Where do they come from?
So wise in pain, yet so brilliantly white …
innocence that never was.
An ancien face stares back at me from the mirror
the happy mask discarded briefly.
Not trapped in replaying
nor speeding ahead
left only with the image
of innocence that never was.
The children I couldn’t hold
The life I couldn’t keep
Why didn’t someone hold me? Teach me? Tell me
the pain of innocence that never was.
It’s funny, I still think life is good, yet bittersweet.
Like a seedling breaking new ground,
I eagerly seek light.
Yet, come the memories of a girl lost,
broken,
alone.
Her innocence that never was

My Loved Ones

by Ilya Prints

Sometimes I close my eyes
and see my father’s slight smile,
and hear his muffled voice,
or feel the concerned mother’s glance,
inquiring if I’m fine.
I’d like to approach them,
to hug, to comfort, …but
it’s impossible now, alas.
Two steps - it was so easy,
so little they needed in all,
but it meant so much for the old -
a smile, an embrace, or a call.
In the swift stream of my life
the years invisibly fly…
I pray, grant me more time
to tell you of my love,
My Loved Ones…

For Hate.

by Nicholas Lovasco

the imperfect
bones, muscles, and smile
attached to your neck
die off like an alcoholics
grand ideas of -it.
and the feelings are stiff
uncomfortable to me,
whipped and lashed
in a car wreck
designed as a death
wish in anger and
honesty.
(beautiful women
turning their backs before me.)
but when i saw
the engine block
a third of the way in
and sipped on
thoughts
at the impound lot
before signing
the title
for scrap’d tin.
those angry thoughts
weren’t so violent anymore.
and a not so perfect mate
fucks me better than
a judge
if he were able to charge me
with a hit
and run
for hate.
My Maple
by Ilya Prints

My maple, beloved my maple,
you stand on a hillock, alone,
deep-frozen and knee-deep in snow.
What mysteries do you keep long nights,
when darkness abounds with frights?

Just recently fall here feasted,
in brilliant green-yellow colors.
With glowing gold-purple cover,
your powerful branches spread out.

In dreams, you have found your lovely
white-pearly slim birch, and fondly
you touched her thin twigs, and whispered
the secret well-cherished words.

Alone, seized by a blizzard,
I am like you, my maple,
I wander in white seas of snow
and sing songs to winter of April.

I feel the arrival of springtime,
and see light of good in my doom,
I’ll find strength to withstand bad weather,
my garden again will bloom.

Oh, maple! Beloved my maple,
you stand on a hillock, alone,
deep-frozen and knee-deep in snow.
What memories bother your soul?
What hopes or dreams do console you?
Why does a gun feel so much heavier when it’s loaded?

This is all that Arthur Dickinson could focus on, sitting in room 413 of a boarding house in Fell’s Point with a pistol laid flat in his hands. The dank air and rowdy hails of sailors and prostitutes floors beneath him couldn’t shake his concentration on the instrument that lay before him. Like the dagger to Macbeth, its transformation was so unreal that it felt like a trick, or some mistake made by the universe itself. He held it already heavier when it’s loaded?  

“A gun feel so much heavier when it’s loaded?”

Like kicking an addiction, Arthur dropped the gun on the musty bed and did all he could to keep his mind off it. His eyes darted around the cramped wooden box of a room, complete with the bare amenities of 19th Century life in the form of a bed, chair, window and a dresser with a mirror. A fitting environment for someone without a past. Out of his window, the faint glow of the nocturnal docks gave light to a city still in its infancy. Horse carriages sat empty aside buildings of wood and the roads were still mostly dirt. Even the seediest corner of Baltimore was peaceful, compared to what he was used to.

Three steps from the bed got him to the mirror, where he stared into the face of a man still foreign to him. His eyes were his own, but the bushy, crooked mustache and five o’clock shadow beneath them felt like lipstick on a pig. Worse still was the greasy, waved-back hairstyle that gladly displayed the mountainous hairline he had always tried to hide. It made him look deranged and desperate, but that was the point. He was just another ugly mug in a boarding house, giving no hint of his true origins. He had to let out a chuckle. Matthew Enber thought of everything, the clever bastard.

“Why does a gun feel so much heavier when it’s loaded?”

The very name Enber forced his thoughts to what lay in the topmost drawer of the dresser. Even if he somehow survived beyond the mission, he’d be cut off from his friends and family forever. Granted he had little of either, but even a few friendly faces become priceless when faced with an eternity without them. Everything was accelerating with or without his approval. In time, the watch would leave this room, as would Arthur and a loaded revolver, making way for Washington D.C. In a matter of hours, President Andrew Jackson would be arriving at the United States Capitol to sign the Indian Removal Act into law. In a matter of seconds, it would be vetoed with a bullet.

And so stood Arthur Dickinson in room 413, ruminating on the first ever assassination of a president of the United States. He sighed heavily, shut his eyes and let the watch fall back into the drawer. He had to succeed. Enber had to succeed. The Project had to succeed. Or all human endeavor could be a failure. He pulled his own watch out of his pocket. Quarter past three in the morning. It was almost time to leave. He turned to retrieve the pistol from the bed. 

Four frantic knocks at the door shook the air around Arthur. What met Arthur Dickinson beyond the door was the long square barrel of a Colt 1911. The handgun was polished stainless steel, with “JPM” carved in elegant script along the side. That gun would not exist for another eighty-one years.

That gun was used to.

The thought hit like a torpedo to the gut. He was really going to sacrifice himself for the Project. Even if he somehow survived beyond the mission, he’d be cut off from his friends and family forever. Granted he had little of either, but even a few friendly faces become priceless when faced with an eternity without them. Everything was accelerating with or without his approval. In time, the watch would leave this room, as would Arthur and a loaded revolver, making way for Washington D.C. In a matter of hours, President Andrew Jackson would be arriving at the United States Capitol to sign the Indian Removal Act into law. In a matter of seconds, it would be vetoed with a bullet.

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The Porch
by Robin Myers

One may tend to think that if a person is minding her own business, doing her homework, art work and the like... Not socializing or going out much, that nothing outside can come in uninvited. So, so very wrong.

A few weeks ago, early in the morning cold, I opened the door to seize the day, as is my habit. The weather is always a surprise, one must know how to dress. I opened the door, pushed my sleepy face out for a quick look see, closed the door. My morning brain tripped all over itself. I opened the door again. My porch was splashed with blood and feces red, brown, reddish brown. Sweet, sticky, stinky. Catches in the back of my throat, covers the floor, the brick, smeared every which way, blood drops dangling. In the middle of all this red is a large something. white.

The impression I had at first was that of a carpenter sitting on the ground, lost, flinging color. The second impression was some kind of large white infant, shock of snowy hair, diapered, with no fingers or toes, Limb ends pointy. I screamed for Mya to call 911 and went to see what I could not comprehend.

A man with white hair, smooth brown skin, white tee shirt, no pants, just white socks (were once white socks) was sitting in the middle of the porch. Bodily fluids covered his paleness. His hands were swaying back and forth, stone blind. The back of his head was caved in. I wrapped him in a purple sheet holding him between my elbows and knees, keeping him from getting up. Was he shot? Had he been beaten? No, no. There was a large bloody pool on my stone doorstep. It took me several mental rewinds to figure out what happened.

I had never seen him before. Had he come out of his apartment, staggering drunk and gone out the wrong door? Did he think he was headed to his bathroom and tripped through the outside door instead? He could not get into my apartment, fell, smashing the back of his skull on my stone stoop.

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I have not been able to get the smell of bodily juices out of my hair, off my skin, out of my nose. The sight of him, the smell of the almost dead does not leave my mind. Now, I see him walking to and from the store, always with a bottle of booze under his arm. He is never without. I wonder if he recognizes me? Doubtful.
Sky Lantern
by Nicholas Lovasco

your smile rises like a chinese lantern soaring in the july cape ann dusk, which begins to turn the yawns of saturday skippers lurking on the indian lake into a confrontation with capabilities and in-realities

i lay in a ten foot skiff anchored in some dim, moon lit cove watching your apparatus in one continuous leap as it comes closer to knowing oddly open space with no good fishing holes.

not seeing all the on looker’s eyes attached to your luminous ascent and how you cause ridiculous thoughts including my own that, someday, we would meet exhausted in the whittier motel for shameful sex and irish steel oatmeal that i make for us on an electric burner while you hang naked, with a sore cunt and as an occasional smoker, -over my shoulder, waiting to drop ashes on summer cottages sleeping along the cape as you grave and gently catch a flame at an altitude designed for proper, modern planes.

The Breaking of Dawn
by Beatrece Varga

Daylight breaks out of the constraints of night unraveling the bonds with golden splendor.
Away the rats! The bats! The owls!
Away the fearsome blackened corners.
Happily birds greet each other “g’morrow”.
Bees awaken sleeping glory, bathing in the sunny pools of sweet.
Rubbing eyes, warm and fresh, AWAKE!
Where has the night gone?
Where are the stripes? The cold steel of the fearsome prison? Gone!!!
Gone also, the yellowed patchment and black ink well I have known so intimately.
This is strange, but good.
No fear, but wonder
Child-like questions
Where is the concrete of my youth?
Where is the grey wall drawn upon before?
Or the forked tongue of recent years?
This is good, but WAIT!
Where is the night? Where is the fire?
When did the burning coals die?
How…
did I awaken to daylight?
What is this new?
This new is scary. Lonely. Security lost.
Why has the cloak of comfort departed?
Return O, night and ash divide!
Return warm fire to ease my trembling!
Ah, but no…
This is the dawn of new life.
clockwise (from bottom left):
White Admiral | Jonathan Cwiek
Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Plum Island, MA | David Salucco
RED | Andrey Samuylov
Clouds | Andrey Samuylov
Plotting Mantis | David Dougwillo
Ordinary People
by Stephanie Buonaugurio

Ordinary people
Volunteer their stories
with a very low level of prompting.

At first you feel trapped
Held hostage by their need to feel heard.

And—because you are just as anonymous as they are to you,
they could care less if you’re uncomfortable.
The stakes are low.

Once you accept,
that you’re “in” the conversation
’til they’re ready to stop
then you can go:

“Hmm, perhaps there’s something for me to hear, here.”

And sometimes it’s just
pieces of someone’s life, that they find precious.

Another grandmother’s grandson
Another dying man’s prognosis
Another soccer mom’s sewing project

(perhaps you showed some slight curiosity, that turned
into her stage for a thirty minute monologue…)

Another widow’s dog pictures.

Not a waste of time
necessarily.

A fine opportunity
to practice good listening skills.
Can you be authentic?
— is the question here. ■
SYNOPSIS:
Bond is on a NATO training exercise with the French Foreign Legion, at their Commando Training Centre in Djibouti. A healthy rivalry develops with his French colleagues as Bond is put through his paces on the notorious obstacle course. One French commando nearly dies in the “Tunnel of Death” – a 50 yard underwater swim in full kit, with rifle. Bond is pulled from the course and briefed on a mission he will be undertaking with a crack team of Legionnaires. Abu-Al-Sharif, a leading Al Qaeda figure, has been sighted in Yemen, in the city of Aden. Bond is to accompany the snatch squad as an observer.

While staking out Al Sharif’s safe house Bond recognizes a dissident IRA bomb maker, Farrell, entering the target house. A fire fight ensues and Al-Sharif is successfully captured. Several of the French commandoes are killed in the operation, and Bond is blamed for not killing Farrell when he had the chance – Bond wanted Farrell alive, who escapes the scene. There are recriminations and French Intelligence accuses the British Secret Service of pursuing its own agenda. Bond is recalled to London and debriefed by M.

It is revealed that M killed Farrell’s father in 1988 in an incident based on the notorious “Death on the Rock” shooting in Gibraltar. M was leading the SAS team that killed 3 IRA bombers, one of whom was Farrell’s father. Farrell is identified as virulently anti-British, but also as a soldier of fortune, hired by various terrorist and criminal organizations for his bomb making expertise.

Spanish Intelligence has notified MI6 that Farrell is currently in Spain, having met with hardliners from ETA – the Basque Separatist Organization – who want to restart a bombing campaign on the Iberian mainland. Bond is dispatched to Pamplona (it is the time of San Fermin – the Running of the Bulls) where he is to rendezvous with a beautiful Spanish Secret Service agent, Isabella Aguerro. Bond and Aguerro chase Farrell through the streets of Pamplona, running against the oncoming tide of humanity and bulls. Farrell escapes again as Bond is injured in the chase.

M orders Bond to Juarez, Mexico, where an ETA hard liner is known to be based. It is the only lead on Farrell, his connection with the ETA dissidents. Meanwhile, the interrogation of Al-Sharif, at Guantanamo, has revealed an Al Qaeda plot to bomb New York. Before leaving for Mexico, Q briefs Bond on the properties of “Americium,” a large quantity of which has gone missing from an Iranian reactor. According to an Iranian defecting scientist, the radioactive material has fallen into the hands of Al Qaeda via Quantum, for the sum of $500,000,000. The potential for Americium’s use in a dirty bomb is awesome. Americium has a half-life of 7,000 years and an affected area would be effectively contaminated forever. The FBI and CIA are aware of a possible dirty bomb threat and were on a state of full alert. Bond and Aguerro team up in Juarez and begin their surveillance of the ETA terrorist, who is staying with Cartel members, apparently as a guest. A passionate relationship soon develops between Bond and Isabella.

A US Special Forces hit team, operating over the border with the approval of the Mexican government, launches a raid on the Cartel’s hacienda. Photographic evidence of Farrell and the New York bombing plot are found at the scene. The ETA terrorist is killed but, before he dies, informs Bond that the Americium has already been smuggled into the US. Aguerro is abducted by Cartel members during the raid. Her severed head is later found attached to a pole in a Juarez street.

Bond meets CIA agent, Felix Leiter, in New York. Leiter informs Bond that Farrell has been posted on “America’s Most Wanted List”, on the pretext that he is wanted for murder and terrorist activities. No mention has been made of the New York bomb plot. American counter-intelligence sources confirm the New York dirty bomb plot, and the impact it would have on the world financial system and the multi-billion dollar value of real estate in Manhattan, if New York is hit.

Going on gut instinct, Bond believes the recently opened Freedom Tower, with its iconic status, will be the target for the explosion. Despite tight security, a disguised Farrell has infiltrated the Tower with the Americium bomb, contained in a suitcase. Bond and Farrell fight at the top of the Tower as Farrell attempts to detonate the device. Farrell falls to his death and Bond disarms the bomb. M debriefs Bond in London and admits to Bond, in a rare moment of intimacy, that his shooting of Farrell’s father had been questionable. Bond replies, “In times of war, questionable actions abound”. M replies, “Quite, Bond. We are at War.”
Personal Essay  
by Linda Tran

During my middle and high school years, I had my future planned out. I planned out when I wanted to travel the world, where I was going to live, what I wanted to be. I was always thinking about my future and never actually lived in the moment. The saying was to live today like it was your last. However, I never did that. I always lived my life thinking about the future and how I wanted it to turn out, but suddenly, it changed. One of my close friends committed suicide in September 2010. I was devastated from the incident, but it made me realize something. I should not focus on my future too much, but instead start living in the present. Her incident taught me to take my last. However, I never did but because of her incident, I started to. Her incident taught me to cherish everything and everyone around me. Because of her incident, I am now more appreciative of all my friends and family. I remind my family almost every day that I love them. I still keep my friend in my life and I use her as a motivation to try harder. She’s my inspiration in my life. 

Every morning after I woke up, I would text my best friends and sisters, wishing them a wonderful day. Almost every day, I went on my social networking sites and thanked the people I have in my life for everything they have done for me. As of today, I still do these things. I still try to reassure my friends and family how thankful I am to have them in my life.

Growing up, I was always stubborn. I argued and made sure I had the last word. I had a short temper. In fact, sometimes, I still do but I am controlling it. Growing up, I was always a reserved girl who did not really get along. After her incident though, I started becoming more affectionate. I used her incident as an example to appreciate everyone I have in my life. Every night before I went to sleep, I told my mom I loved her. I usually never did but because of her friend’s incident, I started to.

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Through This Storm We Do Not Walk Alone
by Beatrece Varga

I know I sound a little dark.
I know I sound a little desperate
but these are just discarded thoughts,
feelings,
hurts.
We all hurt.
we all, at times, feel
discarded
broken.
But, we are not alone.
Though storms come
though teardrops fall,
Through this storm we do not walk alone.
The lie is that we do.
The lie is that we are singular in our pain.
Yet, through this storm, we do not walk alone.
We are unique
and yet so very alike inside.
We all have the same need to be loved,
accepted
cherished
for the little bit that makes us unique,
scared
different
Yet, through this storm,
we do not walk alone.
We all bleed the same.
We all cry for the same needs.
We all need to be loved just for who we are ...
And ... that is why I am convinced that
Through this storm we do not walk alone.
from top to bottom
Nubble Light, York, ME | David Salucco
Grand Wenham Canal | David Salucco
3d Wharf | Gary Lucas

opposite page
Night Photography | Amina Aziz
It was an overcast winter day, and only a light snowfall refreshed the image of the small rural city. It was an ordinary winter day for all, except him, the big tough guy, as he considered himself. Just today, for the first time, he saw his newborn son, his tiny beaming face and his doll-like fingers, and he felt that, beginning now, all his son’s sorrow, and tears, and misfortunes would become his own pain.

As the boy was growing up, the feeling of that small sun had switched on in his home, and lightened, and warmed all around, did not leave him.

Years have passed and the boy, now a tall handsome young man, moved to another city, and his visits and calls became seldom and occasional. But every time, they were as the holidays for the man, who was now at a mature age and looked as if he would soon be an old man. His son was too preoccupied with his own problems, businesses, marriage and divorce, and remarriage.

The years flew. The old man lived alone, and loneliness had become his primary disease. And one time, somebody knocked at his door, and came in, and said quietly "Hello, Dad". He did not recognize the stranger, but after the first few words, he felt that it was him, his son. Age changes both our faces and our appearances, but the voice changes just a little. The old man got lost. He did not know where to put his hands or his clothes, scattered on the chairs, what to say, where to propose to sit down to his guest. His guest, his son. He remembered well his childhood, but did not know his life at present. And his son, in contrast, did not remember much from his past and was preoccupied by his current problems. Their meeting was not long and, as it turned out, was the last.

A few years passed. Through the fuss and the anxiety in his own life, the son had found the time to visit the small rural city, the silent cemetery. He stayed close to the small burial mound, bending his head. In his life, many people either respected, or loved, or even hated him, but nobody except the old man loved him just for the fact that he existed. His old man.
clockwise (from bottom left)
Sandy | Nicole McElian
Flower Fields | Kasha Kowczynski
Tsunami | Jaime Stone
The World Beyond Our Imaginations
by Reichley Tambi Mokom

Facing the immigration officer, listening to the thorn of his voice striking my ear drum, it sounded like Niagara Falls, my heart pounding like an old African dancer playing his “tamboo.” My brain finally translated his words as he said “Welcome to America.” Apparently it was like a dream, as I reflected on the thresholds of my path.

In past years Mexico was the mecca of happiness; every groom and bride would dream to go for their honeymoon, imagining themselves, lying on the white sandy beaches of Cancun, Veracruz, Playa del Carmen through Tampico and Los Cabos. The newlyweds would have an endless view of the blue ocean, the unique sound of the ocean breeze and the whispering sound of ocean birds flying in the sky as the dolphins do their sound of ocean birds flying in the sky as the dolphins do their

Facing  the immigration

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opposite page
Graffiti | Robin Myers
above
Freaky, Fab and Fly | Kasha Kawczynski
HOME
by Kristen Kosta

It’s the calm after the storm that keeps me holding on

hope floods over
like the tide floods over the washed out seashells
and brings them back home

it’s home
they say, when your heart is there

but sometimes the storm carries hearts to the shore
lost
no perception of belonging
until

the calm

and the tide brings me home again
I AM LUCKY
by Ilya Prints

November, gloomy, rainy, changeable weather, but for today, it is light and relatively windless. Red-brown leaves rustling underfoot. I walk the narrow path of the park and inhale this moist decaying scent of declining nature. All around are so marvelous and mysterious. Sunbeams suddenly break through the veil of clouds as a parting, but still bright smile of summer. It is a little bit sad for the memories, but at the same time, I feel a sudden lightness and hope for the beginning of something new.

How quickly the world changes!
I am happy that I have lived up to this time. We have settled in different countries, but we see each other on the computer screen. We can easily search and find any information, articles, music on the Internet. We orient ourselves in space with a GPS. And what a miracle this little fairy magic mirror is, iPhone, inside your pocket – connecting us with the whole world!

How lucky I have been to have lived up to this time.

And at the same time, with slight sadness, I think of those days when we talked with friends looking at each other’s eyes, not by way of the computer, and discussed the world’s problems, not on Skype, and received the letters written by hand and, seemingly, still warm from her hands. … Sometimes, I hear a quiet melody of old unhurried tango, Argentine Tango. … And other melodies, melodies of unforgettable songs emerge from the soul, now and again. Sunset - Sunrise, Sunrise - Sunset. … It is interesting how it happens that these events, which took place in the past, I now find in front of me. Things and images, I’ve always enjoyed, as well as the people with whom I associated, communicated, argued, reconciled and argued again, now sort of hang in the air and become history. It seems to me that everything was easier then, warmer and more natural, or maybe it is only an illusion?

I was lucky to have lived at that time.