

Claudia Williams

Age: 13, Grade: 8

School Name: Altamont School, Birmingham, AL

Educator: Dan Carsen

Category: Poetry

Arlington

I keep up
But my eyes search the ground for darkness

So many leaves are falling.

I pick one up, dry and brown
Another finds my fingertips -
Red maple,
Then
An in-between
Red heart,
Cools to yellow,
Then the color of a dusty road

I can't bring my eyes to meet the cold granite
Rows and rows of
Prince Rupert's Drops
Harder than stone
But if I touch them,
The world will shatter

I long to sink to my knees
And cling, helpless,
To the cold pillar
I wish I could wrap myself up in the ground,
A blanket of grass covering my brittle bones

Drumbeats and my hand
Pierce the layers of clothing to reach my heart

I need the steadiness of these footsteps to keep this heart beating

You were born a horse of coal to carry death to its bed

I remove my hand, but the imprint is left there on my soul

Why does it smell like the ocean?
Maybe it's the tears of the millions.

My heart is sitting shiva for no one, for everyone

You were born a horse of snow to be an angel for those who have died

Bells ringing
Timbre tinted with grief

I hear music drifting in on the wind
And a silent choir in my head

I find this place an enigma -
Somehow,
Grief is beautiful here
Every tear is
Pristine holy water
Anointing heaven's steps

But these are no weeping beggars, no
There is a
Dignity
About them
Unspeakable unspoken
Yet -
There

This dignity draws me
I could spend so long here...
I could spend eternity.

I'll sing you a lullaby every night
That you may hear the stars I see in the sky
May the dead sleep ever peacefully
In the silk embrace of remembrance.