



THE **FIORETTI** 2020

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— Indianapolis —®

The Fioretti
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WHAT IS **THE FIORETTI?**

The Fioretti is the Marian University literary journal founded in 1943. The word “Fioretti” comes from a collection of short stories and popular legends about the life of St. Francis of Assisi (patron of Marian University and the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg), titled *Fioretti di San Francesco d’Assisi*. The word itself means, “Little Flowers.” This is our collection of work or “Little Flowers” by the students of Marian University over the 2019-2020 school year. We hope you enjoy this edition of Marian University’s *Fioretti*.

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MEMOIR

SHORT STORY

SHORT FICTION PLAY

ARTWORK



autumn lessons

by Joel Kelley

gleaning space, leaves score and sweep – leaping from perches
in birches and oaken places; all eyes shower in resplendent fall

sweaters awaken from hibernations, bare souls seek sanctuary
into irrational tendencies – aspirations glazed on pottery in fall

apples transition slowly from “go” to “stop” – the time ripens –
hard-learned lessons, simple equations: scab = kneecap + a fall

expectation shifts, ex-relationships enkindle passionate decay;
as evening chills, sparks of once-leaves pepper the air with fall

hesitation haunts hearts like breaths; third chances and quickly
buried acorns share this venerable wisdom – wait – during fall

a Red Flyer, pumpkin-laden, pulled under crumbling canopies;
naïve, happy until shoe meets root: Joel, you must learn – *fall*.

Hope

by Faith Morgan

Watch as she sings glory to her king
Watch as she yells
for the gates of hell will not prevail
Listen to her voice
For in the tears she dares to rejoice

Strength is her covering
Her hands remain at the plow
When darkness is hovering
She witnesses to the souls to keep her vow

Courage is her way
Her feet refuse to stumble
When heaviness cracks within to sway
She bends the knee and is humbled

Faith is her hope
Her mind untarnished
When war detangles her coat
She walks in truth fully garnished

Watch as she sings glory to her king
Watch as she yells
for the gates of hell will not prevail
Listen to her voice
For in the tears she dares to rejoice
There is hope within the noise

Crown of Creation

by Kyle Stein

Father,

Words fail me.

Truly, I have none left to give;
Every single word I have written
Has already found its home in her heart.

Words cannot describe this fire within me;
This unrelenting desire to give,
As if everything I have touched
Wanted to be shared with her.

Funny how the woman who waits for no one
Would be the one to teach me the virtue of patience.
But I would wait a thousand lifetimes, gladly,
If that's what it would take to be her Man.

She is not mine.
She is not anyone's.
She is not something to be had
As if she were an object to be used.

No, She is God's gift to the world;
Something to be beheld and adored.
She is a font of endless wonder,
Dripping with beauty and grace.

Not owned, nor would I wish to own her;
It's her freedom that calls me to something more.
It will take every ounce of me to Love her,
And yet every inch of my body calls for such a task.

She does not deserve to be half loved anymore;
Away with partial truths and half-hearted lies.
She deserves a full, true, and honest Love.
And where I fall short, God provides.

Drawing forth the magnanimous shout of my soul,
I proclaim His greatness with a humble plea:
To serve, provide, protect, defend,
And love unconditionally.
Father, I thank You for Your gracious gift,
Your finest creation, it's true.
Continue to form me into the Man I must be,
To Love her and to Love You.
Do not let me fail, I cannot do this without You.
Amen.

The One that Starts

by Zach Cleary

I am life
I am hope
I am the change that the world needs
I stand between happiness and despair

I am birth
I am destruction
I am what causes the world to turn
I cause the cycle of life

You are new
You are old
You are the change that causes change
You bring forth the real change in the world

You are dreams
You are memories
You are the vision the world strives for
You bring forth dreams into reality

We are new beginnings
We are the end of life
We are the push in tradition
Yet I am the one that starts

I Thirst

A poem written by Luke Brown from the perspective of Jesus

“Behold this Heart which loves so much and yet is so little loved.”

- Words of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary

Behold my Sacred Heart on fire,
Burning with intense desire
To draw all souls into my love,
That they may live with me above.

But my dear creatures do me spurn,
And unto worldly loves they turn,
Living life in idle laughter,
Wholly heedless of hereafter.

They seek to fill their hearts in vain.
Their search for comfort ends in pain,
Since love of Goods intemperate
Just makes their thirst grow desperate.

Then are they enslaved to lust,
The god in which they chose to trust.
They live this life no longer free
And spend the next apart from me.

On this account, does my heart break,
But I mourn not for my own sake.
If only they turned back to me,
How truly happy they would be.

Since my love is their true desire,
Their thirst is for that holy fire,
With which no worldly love compares.
O let them come and make it theirs!

Please pray that all to me do turn,
That they might not in Hades burn,
But live instead with me above,
United in eternal love.

As we Camino

by Joel Kelley

along Portuguese streets through smiling roses,
you left me;
those pink and yellow bystanders
who never tell, and you never realize:

you left me behind.
As we traveled hallowed paths through somber villages
who never told, so you never realized,
I needed a friend;

as we, somber, followed trails through hallowed villages,
pain in my heel exploded into roses;
I needed a friend
but you didn't;

my achilles exploded like roses,
the misshapen branch silently supported me
because you didn't –
you didn't know how;

a misshapen branch – my only support,
my pace too sleepy, as summer retreats into fall;
yes, you didn't know how
to care for anyone, not even yourself;

my feet pass too slowly, like sun falling behind hills,
we were separated – ground from sky – you too distant
to care for anyone but yourself,
my heart blistered like feet;

we were separated – petals from dead roses – you too distant,
me, two kilometers behind,
heart and feet blistered pink,
face falling like footsteps,

me, five kilometers behind,
hauling my stuffed, yellow pack,
face falling like raindrops:
you left me.

Man in His Arrogance

by Eric Hvidston

In the beginning, there was darkness. And the Universe spoke.
But the Word fell on arrogant ears.
So the Wise Men speak for the Universe,
To survive you must listen.

But the Word fell on arrogant ears.
We have much to learn in order to hear it
To survive you must listen.
And now the Earth cries, but we are ignorant

We have much to learn in order to hear it
Humble yourself with the truth
And now the Earth cries, but we are ignorant
In truth, never worthy of the interposition of a deity

Humble yourself with the truth
And the Arrogant Man thought himself some great work
In truth, never worthy of the interposition of a deity
Go now, "great work", and find yourself a worthy goal

Mortality

by Ariyanna Casey

Time on earth is only precious to
Those who lack it
And
To those whose life was rejected

Once lost, it's never found or restored

Its value undermine
And its' "being" forgotten
A person who dares to waste time
Rejects the value of life and
Accept death as if it was what God intended for us to dwell in

Their life becomes a cry for help because
They value only themselves and their bad deeds, as if
forgetting mortality

Once dead, their legacy decays
And their existence on earth fades
Along with their body

Time on earth is only precious to
Those who acknowledge it
Valuing the uncertainty of it

It is true that the "good life" is only denied by
Those who do not understand it
Because they cannot comprehend what may happen if
they accept
Mortality

The Press

by Faith Morgan

Preach he the word
For the kingdom is pressed
The sick, the needy, tormented have come
Saints of the most high dare not rest
The darkness never targets color
Hold the child
Comfort the mother
Raise the shield
Strengthen the brother
For the devourer will not regress
Preach ye the word
For the kingdom is pressed
Can you hear the cries of war
People crawling to a locked door
Nails scraping the rugged shores
Left to hear God's voice no more
No hope of success
Preach he the word
For the kingdom is pressed
Stand firm, tall, sure
Remember your vow to the Lord
Run with violent hearts
And strengthened minds
Plaster the good news on every wall
Truth divine
For there is little time to jest
Preach ye the word
For the kingdom is pressed

12 Years a Slave

by Erynne Pope

I wish you could see my invisible chains,
My mannerisms, my biases, forever engrained.

Chained to the system
Chained to routine
Chained to the same
Chained in a white world
Chained in my brain

My thoughts...

Whirring and twirling
A black girl in a white world

Who am I?

In a class full of white students
In a room full of “successful” white higher ups
In classrooms each with a white educator

Who am I?

In a society where white is right,
Black is wack, and Latino es no bueno,

Who am I?

Growing up in a public white education system can teach you so much.
Where peers use their privilege as a crutch.
Where my hair, my skin, my jewelry is used for fashion— as a clutch.
Who am I?

Where I walk the halls with kids who can say n*gga
The halls where white students can pull the trigger

Without consequence.

Where every historical figure is white on each page.
With no thought for black students who refuse to engage...

Filled with rage.

Who am I?

“You talk white” “Is that your real hair?”
Yes, I have diction and why do you care?
“Why are your gums black?” “Why’s your hair look like that?”
Umm, that’s just how they are and “Just put on a hat.”

Stripped of my identity. Stripped of reality.
Stripped of my heritage. Stripped of who I’m now proud to be.

Chained to a white education.
Chained to a white presentation.
Chained to a white representation.

Chained to be used for demonstration.
Chained to be used for presentation.
Chained to be used for representation.

Trained to alter my annunciation.
Trained to alter my presentation.

Tired of being the representation.
Tired of giving my explanation.

Exhausted with my whitewashed education.

I wish you could see my invisible chains.

- erylne pope

How'd It Feel

by Kyle Stein

How'd it feel when you put the Sun out of business
With that shining smile of yours?
And the way you looked down afterwards
Like you were bashful of your own brilliance.

How'd it feel when you put the stars in the sky
With each and every twinkle of your eye?
Setting the Northern Lights ablaze
With your magnetic aesthetic.

How'd it feel when you created the ocean
From the stormy seas within your soul?
The only place you ever found deep enough to hide in
With a subtle blue hue that could only be from you.

How'd it feel when you knew I was yours;
The way you set fire to my soul?
Making my heart pace about the room
Hoping to share a dance with yours once more.

How'd it feel, Love, when you read my words
Knowing they were yours alone?
How I etched your name into this side of paradise
In semi-permanent poetic ink.

I know how I felt when I fell in your love;
The first fantasy of my life that ever felt true.
And how the fact you existed at all was ridiculous;
Tell me, Love, how'd it feel to you?

Trembling Hands

by Clare Haenni

Oh treacherous brain
Thinking thoughts you'll never say
Mean things, sad things
Don't give too much away

Oh soft heart
You knew from the start
It would only lead to ruin
But you gave in anyway

Oh crooked mouth
Smiling when things go south
Trying to soften the blow
So he won't go crying home

Oh trembling hands
Never to be held again
Now grip the steering wheel
This will take some time to heal

All I Hear is Rain

by Maura Domogalik

An alarm is blasting through the air, and
all I hear is rain.
Voices ring from way downstairs, and
all I hear is rain.
Tap water drips into the sink, and
all I hear is rain.
Food is chewed and dishes clink, and
all I hear is rain.
Hangers scrape, clothes pushed aside, and
all I hear is rain.
Find something to wear outside, because
of all the rain.
Church bells clang and dead eyes stare.
Steps are heavy, music blares, but
all I hear is rain.
Dressed in black with faces numb,
they highlight all the pain.
Grief is loud and screaming out, but
all I hear is rain.

Garden

by Colleen Schena

Something about the way you look at me
Makes my heart flutter and stop all at once
The sparkle in your eyes makes me self-conscious
And the smile that tugs on your lips makes me forget

The way you gage for my reactions
And tailor your puns to make me smile
The way you let me into your garden heart
And showed me your favorite roses

It makes me wonder what you'll feel like —
If your eyes still sparkle
And you'll still weave your laughs to mine —
When I show you all my thorns.

The Calm Before the Storm

by Kyle Stein

All around me is endless ocean
Without sign of direction to my fore
Only the wake at my aft to keep me company;
A reminder that I sail onwards into the night.

Before me lies the placid sea;
Little waves lap at the side of my ship
Like tender kisses from the tide
As the night envelopes me in its arms.

The sky is replete with darkness
As storm clouds lay heavy overhead.
I am led on only by the scattered light
Cast forth from the pallid face of the Moon.

My vessel creaks softly below me;
Its long and tired body groaning for rest.
The mast reaches out towards an unforgiving sky
As its sails lie still and empty without wind.

I am alone and without direction;
Without compass or starlight to guide me.
Yet here I rest, in the calm of the storm,
Alone with my Love: the Lady of the Sea.

Whatever happens next is beyond me.
Wherever I may end up, only God knows;
The storm comes towards me all the same
But I know I will weather it as I have before.

So I brace myself, rigging in hand,
Anchored firmly in my place;
I am sailor borne for a relentless sea;
I will not fail my destiny.

hickville mansion

by Lauren Milligan

tires tread and scratch the road, tracking gravel into the crabgrass
all the way up to your hickville mansion.

doors slam and fingers pry, the smell of alcohol leaks from my pores,
while i hide beside your hickville mansion.

teeth barred and words slurred, there's blood on my tongue;
a pregnant pause, a babe is in the trashcan outside your hick-
ville mansion

religious ladies in denim skirts, asking for a moment of prayer
but you escape into your hickville mansion.

yellowing flowers peel off the wall, threatening exposure;
you can't hide within the walls of your hickville mansion.

can't hear the ignorance but can't stand to be around it either,
i guess it's time to move out of your hickville mansion.

A Word on a Hand

by Clare Haenni

She wrote so much on her hands it scarred
Her skin absorbed the ink and now the veins run
Blue
Purple
Orange
Visible under the delicate, paper thin membrane
That keeps their inside organs from being outside organs
The words that made up little reminders
Flowed through her system
Pumped through her heart
Word after word after word
But they got stuck
Caused a clog
The overexcited organ beating faster and faster
Until it stopped
The people pierced her heart, took a look inside
And the ink flowed out in a kaleidoscope of colors
Spurting until there was nothing left
And she picked herself back up
And wrote a word on her hand

The City of Dreams

by Erynne Pope

New York.
 Manhattan,
 Crowd,
 SoHo sidewalks.
 Manhattan streets.

Panhandlers,
Mugger,
Bracing,
Street violence,
Fearsome lethality.

Delighted. Joyful. Reality. Embrace. Love. Valiant.

No One Knows

by Tasha Herbert, edited by Faith Morgan

08/31/2018

No One Knows

A hurt deep within the depths of earth
Is like the sound of the ocean waves beating against the shore,
the chirping birds at sunrise
No more like the children screaming of fun and terror cries
the sound of thunder on a stormy day
the beautiful sun rays, the embrace of the rainbow's face.

No one knows

The dark paths you walk alone
Cringing at temptations so strong
Through triumph and pain
Struggling to finish your race

No one knows

How extraordinary of a woman you are; Arms stretched, gasping
for air
unseen bruises forgot to be aware
somehow, we find the strength to conquer the stress someone
has made
The challenges we face as mothers, daughters, aunts, and care-
takers are gone as waste
misunderstood, the hidden hurt and scars that are trapped
under the hood.

No one really knows

The anger, rage, resenting the jealousy that tears us down
Comes from that place of pain, oh how loud
Your love was taught in scorn
The only love felt for long was the love of being born
growing from a baby to a young lady, your love has been tainted;
Love lost, defamed compassion
scurried away knowing no other reaction

Feelings now stated no more of that love in vain; but there's
hope in this broken chain

As Whitney Houston proclaimed, learning to love your self is the
greatest gift of all

Tears running down your face; restraining us from the beauty
you already possess in fear

Woman you are extraordinary, and love is still here

Find it within yourself first before running to break someone else
Love and you will be loved; Let love heal the wounds and forgive-
ness be a friend

SO NO ONE KNOWS

How you did it because you found the secret within

Love like the clear clouds in the sky
after the storm comes a rainbow, a promise that will not lie
be the peak of the Sun between the clouds.

The freedom you feel; The relief you scream; now woman be set free
Free at last is the extraordinary woman you are

Go sistas and be true to yourself and uplift your sista afar
Share with her the thoughts that fought and how you overcame
Fix a sistas tilted crown without shame; Stop the pain and love
once more

Support that hugs the inner core. There's always enough of
us and love to brace the shores; Turn and comprehend you no
longer must hide. Come from the shadows, you deserved to be
loved and love will abide because We Know

I Have Known Peace

by Colleen Schena

*I know Peace like an old friend,
But I once was her stranger —
I had to discover her, in the end,
Like all do — just by living:*

*Peace, she is the song of birds
And the new green leaves of branches.
Peace, she is the blue sky
And the slow, gentle breeze.*

*Peace, she is found in the flowers
And their lively, bright colors.
She is the rays of sunshine
And water without ice.*

*Peace comes after the storm
And the world's most brutal fires.
She glows in darkness
Like the moon who lights the night.*

*Peace is the bare feet of summer
And the wings of butterflies —
She is blue waves and bird wings
And she lays, dormant, in every heart.*

Behold your Mother

A poem written by Luke Brown from the perspective of Our Lady of Sorrows

“I look at all on earth, to see if any pity me and meditate upon my sorrows, and I find very few.”

- Mary's words to St. Bridget of Sweden

Behold my spotless heart afire,
Burning with the sole desire
To lead all souls unto my Son,
That men my children might become.

When I gave birth to Christ my Lord,
I felt no pain nor aught discord,
Since, by the graces he would win,
He kept me from all stain of sin.

When men my Son did crucify,
Within my soul, I too did die.
My heart was riven by a sword,
Proving true the prophet's word.

Though other martyrs were consoled
By Christ's own death which made them bold,
His death was all that Martyred me,
So how could it my comfort be?

And yet I suffered not in vain;
My woe became as labor pain.
For sharing in his pain untold,
Christ made me Mother of his fold.

As Queen in heaven now I reign,
Yet men their Savior still disdain.
With each indifferent show of scorn,
They pierce my heart as with a thorn.

Please join your sorrow to my own
That for these sins you may atone.
Pray too that all accept my Son
And their salvation which he won.

poem written in the evening on a digital sticky note

by Nicholas Rivelli

And it's all good
Feeling a little like All Might
Staying up all night
Breathing out a sigh of relief
Feeling lighter than leaves
As the darkness depletes

Tired, to say the least
But I think I'm done fighting the King
Drinking in the light that He brings –
A whole flight of the best
Defeating my stress and sealing my death
Bleed for my Queen, cause she's got me in check

I think I can remember fondly and not wrongly
At least now, in this moment I've captured
Though it'll pass and I'll go out to pasture

I think too much, and I guess
I've lacked maturity, while she quickly quelled the gusts
Maybe it's the feminine genius, maybe it's Adam's fall
Or maybe I'm just loved completely after all.

Suffocating at the Carwash

by Steven Conry

7.25 an hour plus tips for killer smoke,
cigs smother not just lungs but car windows.
We choke on it and return again tomorrow,
scrubbing glass, streaks won't leave.

Smothers not just lungs but car windows
stained yellow with unyielding grime .
Scrubbing glass, streaks won't leave,
one of us steals from our pooled tips.

Stained yellow with unyielding grime,
boss screams at a patron to never return.
One of us steals from our pooled tips,
fans thunder at the mouth of the tunnel.

Boss screams at a patron to never return,
texts one of us—sacked, yet back next week.
Fans thunder at the mouth of the tunnel,
we lean on car seats, try to scour the tar.

Texts one of us—sacked, yet back next week
with white cotton towels scarred by smoke.
We lean on car seats, try to scour the tar.
Customers pull up when rainclouds above.

With white cotton towels scarred by smoke,
we ingest the toxins on our stolen breaks.
Customers pull up when rainclouds above,
cars in line past closing still our job.

We ingest the toxins on our stolen breaks,
7.25 an hour plus tips for killer smoke.
Cars in line past closing—still our job.
We choke on it, and return again tomorrow.

Sweet Smile, Sweet Smile

by Faith Morgan

08/31/2018

I leaped for joy once I knew
I saw the sun lite gates, the shea butter melted case
Of every tear traced back to a bottle
Wings grasped by fear and made its knees model my joy
Hmm the day I wished I'd smiled

I shouted for zeal once I knew
I saw the healed scars as victory, the salted caramel hickory
Of the beauty I had forgotten
Hand painted so perfectly, my God saw no inch rotten
Hmm the day I remembered to smile

I stretched for more once I knew
I saw an arm reach for me, rich coco beans
Of laughter my ears danced to every single beat
Lips spoke two single words so sweet, beautifully made
Hmm the day I let myself smile

I remember the blessings: I am humbled
Not swift to cause my short pain to mumble
I rejoice in this life
Precious gift given in spite of me and all my junk files
Hmm such a sweet day when I smiled

This is Colour

by Maura Domogalik

He fell hard and he fell fast
as he looked into brown eyes—bright gold.
He wondered if this was colour.

Sunset rays left him aghast.
He hadn't known love could be so bold.
He fell hard and he fell fast.

The grays and charcoals of the past
brought memories of lies once told.
They whispered, "this is colour."

On creamy skin indigo bruises cast
an outline where she used to hold.
He fell hard and he fell fast.

The glossy shade of eyes now glassed
and putrid smell of love to mold
proved that this, long ago, was colour.

Crimson showed in moments last,
rather than seeing white of old.
He fell hard and he fell fast
and breathed, "so this is colour."

Moonlight Sonata

by Kyle Stein

It is in the still of the night
Where I find my solace.

In its solitude, sweet serenity; A
port after a long journey at sea.

A time where prayers are
prayed And secrets are shared.

A time where thoughts wander
aimlessly And dreams run wild and free.

A time where the chains of emotion are broken
And tears are shed fearlessly.

O, Mistress of the Night,
What more do you require?

What is left of me to give That will put
your stormy heart at ease?

For there is but water in my
eyes And a fire within my heart;

Do you need a
drink Or a spark?



A Rosebud from the Ashes

by Elizabeth Sexton

The Phrase

I struggle to find parking as I watch the time. I walk across the campus seeing a Marian sign and feel the urge to roll my eyes. I walk down the hall and walk into a dark classroom full of strangers aside from one familiar face. The projector lights up the room and I glare at the bright screen, as if it had done something to me. Then I see it.

“Home is where the heart is”

A simple phrase, that is honestly quite cliché, transports me back to St. Joe’s. Warm tears roll down my face making the ink run on my notes. I glance out the window watching cars circle around a full parking lot as the class discusses something about psychology that I couldn’t care less about.

Home

Click, click, click. My turn signal seems to speed up as I wait until it is safe to turn into what will be my home for the next 4 years. My excitement boils over and I let out a giggle. I park and a swarm of people gather around my car. All wearing dark purple shirts and laughing as they ask if I need help while I try to drag my purple trunk up the steel staircase.

“Just open the door, we’ll grab the stuff.”

I nod my head and rush up the staircase and start the search for my room.

“210, 213, 218! Here I am!”

I turn the old brass key and forcefully push the door open. I smile so wide you see my pink gums and I set down my purse.

“I’m in here!”

I poke my head through the door as the group of helpers floods my room with all the things that I had packed in my car this morning. Here I am. I made it.

The Suspicious Email

I am curled up on the couch laying my head on my mom’s lap watching the Thanksgiving Day Parade when I feel the vibration from my phone. I see a notification bar telling me of an email from St. Joe. I slide open the notification and it takes me to the email. I don’t quite understand what they are saying but it discusses losing academic credibility if they don’t do something. It also says not to worry, so I don’t.

It’s not a “Family Room”

Class continues without me. It’s easy to become invisible while at Marian or I’m just really good at distancing myself. She claims we’re free to go and my scowl diminishes. I drudge through the wide hallways being careful to watch my feet so no one sees the remnants of my tears, not like anyone would care enough to see the red splotches around my eyes. Right, left, right, left, right, left, and open door. My head lifts just to scan the “Family Room” trying my best to find an empty spot. I continue my march to the empty chair and put in my earbuds and turn up my music to ensure I am completely secluded.

St. Joe’s Special

I curl up on the couch and almost fall to the floor. I tuck my feet underneath me and drink my Cup O Joe Special while I flash a warming smile at my friends that make their way through the small room in the church basement. A mismatch array of broken furniture, old board games, and angsty art fills the room making it our space. Free coffee, good company, and fun music make my favorite hangout. We gather on the outdated couches and chairs and vote on who will be the next officers for our club. I state my case to be the Historian, and I am sent out in the hall. I am invited back in and given the good news. Already an officer as a freshman. My chest puffs up and I can’t lose the smile on my face. I’m given a bag full of pictures from decades of students who loved this space, just like I do.

The Beginning of The End

Today we find out. The Board of Trustees voted on our school, our home, our future. The air is stale and faces grim at what is expected to be the last day we can hope. I try to believe that we can make it. This place is too good, the professors too caring, and the difference they make is too big that God would not end my home. It feels as if I have a boulder in my stomach as I sit in the Core lecture hall. I zone out and think that I have nothing to worry about, it will be ok, and we won't close. The entire school makes their way in the hall and finds a seat. Soon we run out of chairs and people gather in the back. I find my friends and give up my seat to surround myself with comforting faces. An arm drapes over my shoulder as the President walks up to the microphone. The room dies down and no one makes a sound.

"The board has decided to suspend operations starting May 2017. We will not be taking questions at this time. Thank you."

A wail of pain erupts from the crowd, and the arm that was around my shoulder brings me in for a hug. Tears stream down our cheeks and more friends join our hug. The group hug cries together. Students around us feel outraged and scream as they storm out.

"Coward!"

"You don't even have the decency to tell us why?!"

Devastation fills our hearts as we realize everything we've just lost.

Parade of Vultures

"Marian University set up computers in Halleck and are helping with applications."

"I don't know if I want to go there."

"They're offering to match your award letter and still add more scholarships."

"I guess that's good..."

I scrunch my nose as I walk through the doors and make my way up the steps to the parade of vultures collecting students from the dying college.

"Well, I have to go somewhere."

I sit down and start my application, I wiggle in the computer chair as I try to focus on the task at hand. After I finish the application I make my way around the ballroom inspecting the mural. The history wrapped around the collection of students looking for a future who got to experience a part of it. My friend looks over at me with a look of concern.

"You ok?"

"I will be."

Blooming Out of the Ashes

I sit in solitude in a crowded room. I hear a roar of laughter through the earbuds lodged in my ears. My laptop consumes my attention and I don't see the finger reach to tap on my shoulder. I jump and whip my head to see the welcoming smile spread across a familiar face.

"Hey, mind if I have a seat?"

"Not at all, go ahead."

My dread dissipates with an old acquaintance who understands. The pain of our experience connects us and our friendship is a rosebud blooming from the ashes. I feel as if there is a new beginning while I sit across from you and I joined in the laughter I avoided not too long ago.



Sunday Best

by Lauren Milligan

The white collar enters and the angels rejoice. Women raise on their kitten heels, only their Sunday best. Mothers hold their children in place as they greet the pastor.

“Good morning,” He bellows, arms open to embrace everyone.

“Good morning,” they all shrill, almost falling out of the pews to get his attention.

“Would you like to have coffee with me? Come back to my office.” He had a devilish grin.

The mother shoos her children away into the arms of another woman. The pastor in front of her is all that matters. And so, he guides her back to his office, one hand pressing firmly against her lower back, causing hell to break loose in her abdomen.

The white collar enters and the demons cackle. The woman falls from grace, onto her knees; he’s going to ruin her Sunday best.

The Still Lake

by Ragan Williams

The lake stretched out, placid and still. It was disturbed by some residual ripples from the rowboat Evan had just returned to dock. He tied it there neatly; he was familiar with this lake, as it was situated in the woods behind his family’s lake house. This summer, he’d come up with his girlfriend, but he planned to go home alone.

Initially, this fact had brought his mood down exponentially. But, he stifled his worry and focused on moving forward. That was what life was about, after all; marching on. His father claimed the military taught him that. The military had also taught him some mean switchblade techniques and a cruel brand of discipline. Or, maybe he just said the military taught him that to avoid the ugly truth of it: his father was a cruel man, and he enjoyed being a cruel man. That was the reality of it.

Evan understood this and respected it. He could even empathize with it. Because, how many times had his girlfriend called him mean, and he’d blamed it on his own father? That, despite the fact that his father’s old punishments had nothing to do with it; he enjoyed his way of being. Her lack of understanding toward the truth of who he was played a large part in why they needed to so separate ways. That, and his tendency toward cruelty.

Evan shook his head. It was too beautiful a morning to be caught up in these petty arguments. He stood on the dock and watched, hands in his pockets despite their grime, as the sun rose. Leaves of a deep inky green caught the pink and golden glow of the sun, reflecting its beams back up at the sky. The surface of the lake did, too, transforming gradually from murky to vibrant.

By the time the sun had completely risen, the lake was as still as if he’d never performed his gruesome task at all. And, it was a splendid morning, beautiful and vibrant. That made going home by himself easier, less lonely even. He didn’t truly regret the loss of his girlfriend’s company; though it was a long drive, he could use the time to think.

Besides, he imagined she appreciated the lovely morning, even if her view came from the bottom of the lake.

Vapor on the Mirror

by Keith C. Hart

1952 – Kissed

They placed baby Johnny on a pillow between them. The Ford F-Series 1949 truck, red and lustrous, lacked seatbelts, which would not really start appearing in vehicles for six years, would not become mandatory for 16, in 1968. Anna Fern kept her hand on Johnny and felt his breath rise and fall, rise and fall, all the while Bernie beamed like a fool. He reached over and placed his hand on top of Anna Fern's. Their hands held little Johnny in place as Bernie braked into the garage. Maria gave her loudest three-year old squeal when she saw her new baby brother, but Anna Fern had to make sure that she was not too rough, that she realized that Johnny was real, not a toy that could just be bought again if he was broken.

After Maria was put to bed, Anna Fern sat on the couch and prayed her rosary while Johnny nursed. Bernard came and put his arm around her shoulders and watched his son eat, his wife pray. After she had finished the Salve Regina, she kissed the top of Johnny's head, and Bernard kissed the top of hers.

1997 – Shattered

"Grandma!" Nathan flung his arms around her, but his smile was not on her but on the package under her arms.

"Oh, hello, now stop looking, these cookies are for your mother."

He kept grinning up at her.

Anita was in the bedroom, holding her tiny newborn. She fawned over her newest grandbaby, while her daughter scolded her for bringing cookies.

"Where's Dad?"

"He had a cold and didn't want to risk the baby getting it." Anita thrust the baby towards her mom, but Anna Fern ignored the baby and looked absent-mindedly at a picture of Nathan on the wall instead. "Well, here, take him."

"Why don't you just get up and wait for me to sit in the recliner. I'm not feeling well."

"I hope you haven't caught what Dad has."

"No, no, I'm just dizzy, haven't eaten enough."

She held the baby for a while, sitting, and they chatted and gossiped. When the baby fell asleep and Anita placed him in the crib, they went into the kitchen to make Nathan and themselves some sandwiches.

"When will Bud be home?" Anna Fern asked Anita as she was putting the mustard back in the fridge.

"Late, they still haven't put all the corn out. This time of year, I just don't see him."

"And when winter comes and harvest is done you can't get him to leave the house."

"Yeah, and maybe-"

The pickle jar slipped from Anna Fern's fingers and shattered across the kitchen floor, leaving gherkins and glass in a green puddle at her feet.

1953 – Puddle

Johnny had had another seizure. Anna Fern knew because when she got up to pee at two in the morning, Johnny was sleeping on his side with a puddle of green vomit, the peas he had for supper, beside him. Oh, thank you, Christ, that he had been sleeping on his side.

Shaking and vomiting had become normal for Johnny the last two months. He was shaky on his legs, still learning to walk, and every time he fell she wanted to scream because she thought that he was having another one. The doctor will tell us tomorrow what it is, the bloodwork, scans, surely by now he knows what it is?

And, to her horror, he did.

1998 – Blood

Bernard helped take her clothes off and set her on the shower chair. As he undressed her, she thought back to their wedding night, when they had both lost their virginity, and how it had thrilled her as he unbuttoned each of the fifty-four buttons between the neck and waistline of her white dress. Maria had come nine months and a week later, and she was always careful to tell people that it was nine months and a week after the wedding that Maria was born, lest anyone get scandalous ideas.

Once Bernard had placed Anna Fern on the shower chair, Anita started to shave her mother's legs. They did not speak, because Anna

Fern could not anymore and Anita was too tired after teaching all day at school and getting supper for Nathan and her youngest son ready.

Anita was very tired, and her hand slipped, nicking her mother so that a blood red ribbon descended down the leg. Embarrassed, looking for a way to make a joke about it, Anita looked up and said, "That's for when you slapped me and bruised my face the night before prom."

1977 – Framed

Anita stood at the top of the ladder and looped the Christmas lights around the basketball goal.

Lacey called, "Anita! Richie's looking up your skirt."

"No I'm not, I'm just admiring the Christmas lights!"

She looked down and scolded Richie Crofton. He grinned up at her mischievously, devilishly, grinned up into her eyes framed by those black-framed glasses. Some high school boys, especially the underclassmen, still had such an innocent grin when they flirted with girls, but Richie's had at some point lost any innocent pretense.

Anita stepped down the ladder and heard Lacey chime up, "All right ladies - and Richie – the gym looks fantastic. Remember, the grand march is at five, so be here by four thirty with your dates. Thanks for your help."

Lacey came bounding over to her.

"Anita, you still need a ride back?"

"Yeah, that would be great."

"Ok, but let me run by the art room to see if Mrs. Lopes ordered enough candles for the tables."

"Hey, Anita, I don't mind taking you back."

"Thanks, Richie, but Lacey said she will."

"Well she's on the opposite side of town, and I drive by your house to get to mine anyway. No big deal."

The clock on the gym's wall showed 10:43. Her curfew was eleven.

"Ok, Richie, I'll go with you. Thanks anyway, Lace."

Richie was poor, so he drove a rusted over pickup, a 1949 Ford that looked like it still should not be able to run, but run it did, and he whipped it out of the parking lot, going much too fast, driving through the sleepy town until they saw fields, some of them Bud's dad's family's fields.

It was past one of these fields that Richie turned right, down a dirt road without any houses on it.

"Hey, Richie, what's going on?"

"Nothing. I'd just thought we'd go on a drive."

"No, I don't want to. Take me home."

"Are you-?"

"Richie, take me home now and do not make me tell you again."

"Fine, fine, have it your way. I'll turn around up here."

But he did not turn around. He kept driving. Anita started looking for weapons. No car keys, no coins, her purse was forgotten at home.

He reached over and put his hand on her thigh. Started rubbing.

Her nails, she could fight with those. They were long and ready to be painted red tomorrow, blood red to match her dress. Bud loved red, red was his favorite... Bud...

"Richie!" She turned and looked at him. "If you don't turn this fucking rust bucket around Bud will kill you. He will. He'll take a baseball bat, along with his friends, and beat your scrawny arms and legs until they lay shattered in a puddle of your own blood. Get your hand off me and take me home, now."

Richie thought of Bud, the farmer's son who had been doing heavy lifting since grade school, the son of a farmer's wife who had grown up eating hardy, farmer's wife meals.

He pulled into her drive way at 11:34. Her mother's black silhouette was framed in the living room window. She got out of the car and said not one word to Richie. She slammed the door. Her house was cool compared to how hot she had felt in that truck. Not a light was on in the house except in the living room, so she went there. Her mother was still standing by the window, facing her. They were alone. Anna Fern took a step towards her daughter and slapped her across the face. The slap propelled her glasses off her face and against the wall. The glasses lay broken on the floor beneath the framed baby pictures.

"I will not have my daughter fooling around with one of those uncouth Crofton's. What would Bud say? Are you going to lose a man from a good Catholic family to someone like Richie Crofton? If you ever get pregnant..."

Anita stood there and took it, took it all into herself, her mother's pride, her mother's rage, her mother's fear. Tears flowed from her eyes, but Anna Fern's were dry, hard marbles behind the screen

of her glasses. Anita went to the wall and picked up her broken ones. When she stood up, her face was level with the framed baby pictures. In her blurry vision, each baby looked the same, Maria, Donna, Tony, Gina, herself, and poor little Johnny, who only Maria had ever met.

1999 – Angel

Anna Fern lay dying on her bed. The ALS, and pneumonia now, had caught up with her. Bernard laid beside her, kept his hand on her chest, felt her breath rise and fall, rise and fall. Her children, minus Johnny, prayed the rosary around her until she breathed her last. Or, if Johnny was there, she was the only one to see him.

1954 – Breathe

Forty-five years before Anita would begin regularly placing flowers at the graves of her mother and her brother, Anna Fern and Bernard got out of bed to begin their day. As she, pregnant with Donna, spread butter across toast for Maria and themselves, she heard Bernie's voice in the next room, Anna. It was the way he said it that made her know. She walked into the nursery and grabbed the handheld mirror on top of the dresser. Bernard was holding his son who would not wake up. The doctors had told them that the way to best know if Johnny was dead, and not just having a seizure was to place a mirror under his mouth and watch for it to fog up with breath. No vapor, no life. She opened his little mouth and placed the mirror in as much as his cheeks would allow. He was so cold, still, white, that she did not need the lack of vapor on the mirror to tell her he was dead, but she performed the ritual anyway. She performed this mirror ritual with the severity in which she prayed her rosaries. A numbness filled her extremities while inside her, down near her stomach, she felt a growing heat, a rage that needed to be spat out. Tempted to throw the mirror and shatter it against the wall, she instead dropped it into the crib and took Johnny from her husband. He wrapped his arms around her, difficult as it was because of her shaking and screaming, brought his head against her cheek while she raised Johnny up closer.

Her hot tears fell into Johnny's face as Bernard held her and cried into hers.

The Devil's Storm

by Chris Brake

It started on my drive from Milwaukee to Chicago. It was not supposed to be a long trip. Nothing extreme or anything; a simple excursion. That is, until the temperature dove straight into hell, and the snow started to swallow up everything.

The original goal was to beat the weather. The radar said that if I left Milwaukee at 8:00 PM, I should be back in the comfort of my home before the blizzard struck. It should have been an uneventful trip. I would undoubtedly be safe and sound, without a worry or care in the world. The only activity in my home would be the sound of an inviting cup of hot chocolate being made and the ruffling of my cozy blue blanket as I curl up nice and snug on my couch.

That vision was now far from my consciousness. I was driving on the interstate. I saw flurries hurling toward me and my windshield. I saw fear creeping into me as my sight was becoming severely hindered. The roads were icy. A monster formed from the clouds in the collective blurriness of white that was all around me. The ice outside started to creep into my emotional state like an abrasive chilly hand grabbing at my heart, threatening to make it stop beating. I wondered about my proximity to other cars. I wondered how I could get through this.

When the snow started to blind me, I realized just how serious this blizzard had become. All it took were the tires of my blue Mazda hitting a patch of ice. I slid off the road and into the field that was off to the side as time seemed to freeze for a moment. My suspicion had turned to reality. The simple but also paralyzing process of losing all control set in as I shot across one lane and crashed into a pile of snow. I was stuck. One thing was for sure, I was not going to get anywhere in this car.

I sat there in my glorious car, which had both kept me from being injured in this incident and was also shielding me from the fury taking place outside its windows. I had to make a decision, or I would either get into further trouble or freeze. The temperature had dropped to an ungodly -10 degrees Fahrenheit. This was dangerous.

There was no service to call anyone with my cell phone. There was an exit about a mile ahead I was fairly sure. It was time to take

matters into my own hands. My toughness would be put to the ultimate test. I braced myself and bundled up as much as was humanly possible. I grabbed my scarf, threw my hood up, and prepared for the worst.

Opening my car door brought a tidal wave's worth of wind smacking me bluntly on the chin. The blizzard was screaming now, and I had to combat it with only my guts. I started to trudge through the snow at the fastest pace I could muster. I could make out other cars having struggles of their own. Could fate bring a horrible death if one of them decides to head off the road in my direction? Only time would tell. I had to move.

After ten minutes of fighting through the weather, I was able to escape the dangers of the interstate. I was looking for a gas station when I saw someone lying on the ground. When I could finally make out features, it looked like a homeless man. He was bald, he had a thick, black coat on, and his face was bright red. My expression turned to horror when I recognized he was struggling to breathe. He was dying. I hollered at him. I shook him. But the only sound he made was a feeble grunt. I, myself, was struggling. In a split decision, I grabbed him and helped him up.

"Stay on your feet and walk with me!" I yelled to him as I put my arm around him for support. I used all my strength to drag him through the blizzard. It was not letting up. Minutes went by.

"Come on, man! You can do this!" I encouraged him, as I saw his body falter through the mist.

I had never seen an abominable snowman. I used to fear a giant, white monster would chase me down and eat me. For a moment, I would have preferred to see one instead of the storm that was trying to take my life. I questioned whether I had the strength to keep helping this poor soul move through this horrid snow. I wondered if it would be immoral to let him go. It was then when I regretted ever complaining about not having a white Christmas.

My face was burning. My feet were throbbing. Five minutes felt like an hour. Our lives were being threatened, and the snow was making it harder and harder to walk.

I think twenty minutes had gone by when I finally found a gas station. I helped the man into the warm and nearly collapsed as I set him on the floor. He looked like he was about ready to faint. I was too.

I ran to get him some coffee. I helped him drink it right there on the gas station floor. He spat some of it back up on my lap, but I helped him continue drinking.

When I asked him if he was okay, he just looked into my eyes in a way that told me more than if he had spoken. We were both humbled, the two of us. We had been exhausted by a terrible storm, but we never backed down. We were fighters.

Next, I pulled out my cell phone and called 9-1-1. An ambulance came for him and immediately put him in the back. As they pulled away, I felt a twinge of sadness. I never got his name. It took me a second to realize the magnitude of the journey this stranger and I had taken. I hoped he would be all right. Next, I got a call from somebody else.

"Hello," I answered my wife.

"Honey, how are you?! I know the weather took a turn for the worst."

"I'm just fine!" I replied. Suddenly, a wry smile appeared on my face. "I've looked straight into the eyes of the devil and came away with the victory."



How far the apple falls

by Joel Kelley

Characters:

Lee – fifteen years old, tall, scrawny, close-cut blonde hair, heavy eyebrows and fierce eyes; known by the neighbors to be “rowdy”
Bo – fifteen years old, well-built, an unkempt brown mop of hair, delicate face and young eyes; often described by friends’ moms as “polite”

Setting:

Local cemetery, approximately 10pm

Time:

Present

Lights fade in, revealing several headstones onstage. Police sirens sound in the distance. Smoke curls like spirits around the graves and tall grass. The lighting is ominous, dark. A silhouette of the mausoleum haunts the background. One boy, Lee, rushes into the middle of stage holding a hunting rifle, out of breath. He checks the gravesite, peering behind some of the graves as if the undead hide in wait. He pants.

Lee: This... *(heaving a sigh)* ...should be good.

Looking around, he carefully rests the gun against the back of one of the headstones stage-left. After a cursory examination of the names on the graves, he chooses to lean against one in the center of stage. He closes his eyes, putting his head down, taking deep breaths. Somewhere, a crow’s caw tears through the cool, evening air. He is startled but puts his head back down. Suddenly Bo sprints in, looking over his shoulder, running smack into Lee.

Lee: Watch it!

Bo: *(nervously, breathless)* Oh man oh man oh man oh –

Lee: *(interrupting, hands open to calm him)* Chill out dude.

Bo: *(stammering)* I can’t believe that we just... that you just...

Lee: *(less kindly)* I said chill out!

Bo: But didn’t you see the way that –

Lee: *(interrupting, frustrated)* – yes –

Bo: – and how he just –

Lee: – I know, shit!

Bo: *(running his hands through his hair, thinking aloud)* What are we gonna do?

Lee: *(dismissively)* I don’t know.

Bo: *(desperately)* Lee, what are we gonna do?

Lee: *(standing up and shouting)* DAMMIT I DON’T KNOW!

Bo stumbles back at the response.

Lee: *(regaining composure)* Look, I don’t know.

Bo: What happens if the cops come for us?

Lee: They won’t think to look for us here, it’s too creepy.

Bo: *(glancing around)* Yeah, no kidding.

Lee: What, are you scared?

Bo: *(defensively)* No...

Lee: *(grabbing Bo’s shirt)* Wanna go cry to mommy?

Bo: *(pushing him away)* You’re starting to sound like him.

Lee: Well, we don’t have to worry about him anymore.

He releases Bo. Bo rubs his chest and rolls his neck, then suddenly shoves Lee.

Lee: *(shoving back)* Are you kidding me?

Bo: *(shouting)* What are you gonna do, shoot me too?

Lee: *(matching the tone, pointing an accusatory finger)* Don’t act all innocent! You hated him, too! You were in on it!

Bo: Yeah, but it was your plan!

Lee: You stole the frickin gun from his safe!

Bo: You pulled the trigger!

Lee: *(about to shout, stops himself, looks down)* ...yeah, and?

He turns, his eyes wandering toward the gun. Bo notices the gun for the first time.

Bo: (*perturbed*) You didn't even get rid of it?
Lee: (*glancing up*) look, there wasn't much time okay? It all happened pretty fast.
Bo: Pretty fast? He was just sitting on the couch drinking booze, same as always! Mom wasn't even home!
Lee: Don't say it like she would have cared either way.
Bo: Don't talk about my mom that way.
Lee: Oh, she's "your mom" now?
Bo: Yeah, as a matter of fact, she is. And she actually cared for other people. Unlike your dad.

Bo turns to examine a headstone behind him. Lee, agitated, springs on top of Bo, pinning him to the ground.

Lee: (*through gritted teeth*) Take it back!
Bo: Are you frickin kidding me?

They grapple on the grass until Bo lands an elbow on Lee's mouth; they separate. Lee rubs his hand against his lips, checking for blood. He finds none.

Lee: (*spitting imagined blood into the grass*) Is that the best you got?
Bo: (*eyes widening at the realization*) You are just like him.
Lee: (*shaking his head, quietly*) Take it back.
Bo: You never know when to quit, just like him.
Lee: Cut it out!
Bo: I wouldn't be surprised if you were drunk right now, too!
Lee: (*snarling*) That's it!

Growling, Lee lunges for Bo a second time. They topple to the floor, grunting. Suddenly, a siren pierces the night and red and blue lights flicker across the stage. The boys stop fighting and lay flat against the floor, motionless. The siren fades out and the lights pass.

Lee: (*sighing in relief*) Shit, that was close.
Bo: (*noticing Lee's hand on his back*) Get off me, you freak.

Bo stands, dusts himself off, and walks stage right, leaving Lee on the ground.

Lee: (*rolling over on the ground, quietly rubbing his eyes*) What have I done?
Bo: (*sarcastically*) More like, "what haven't you done?"
Lee: (*glaring toward Bo*) I haven't ended your life... yet.
Bo: Wouldn't be the first time tonight.
Lee: (*half-joking*) Is that a challenge?
Bo: This whole thing is so stupid. I mean, hiding in a graveyard? How cliché.
Lee: (*standing up, swiping dirt off his pants and shirt*) Look, I couldn't get in the church, and I was in a hurry.
Bo: And shooting your father? That's right out of a frickin country song.
Lee: (*assuming Country accent*) Yeehaw pardner
Bo: Is this a joke to you? We just shot someone.
Lee: I'm not laughing... (*forcing a smile*) But I am happy
Bo: (*disregarding the comment, correcting himself*) YOU just shot someone.
Lee: Yes, (*less confidently*) I shot someone...
Bo: You shot your dad.
Lee: Yeah but what does that even mean.
Bo: (*miming the scene*) Well, you held the rifle like this...
Lee: No, I mean "dad".

Reflective pause.

Bo: At least yours didn't run off with another woman.
Lee: At least you didn't shoot yours.

The boys fall into an uneasy silence. They each eye the gun a second time. Bo coughs awkwardly. Lee starts to laugh.

Bo: (*glancing sideways at Lee*) What's so funny?
Lee: (*unable to contain himself*) Remember whenever he stumbled home so drunk that we could smell him before he even reached the block?

Bo: *(not finding the humor in it)* Which time?

Lee: And he tripped up the stairs, complaining that someone had taken out a few steps?

Bo: I remember not being able to sleep that night.

Lee: And then he threw up all over himself?

Bo: Why is this funny?

Lee: *(almost hysterical)* And then started shouting at mom?

Bo: Lee?

Lee: And then he went to the fridge...

Bo: Lee.

Lee: ...and started throwing all the leftovers at her. *(miming and impersonating his father)* "All this food you make is shit!"

Bo: Lee.

Lee: ...and then, he grabbed the dishes from the cabinets...

Bo: *(quieter)* c'mon Lee.

Lee: *(shouting)* and he started throwing the China plates and coffee mugs and wine glasses at her! *(suddenly calm)* and she just sat there crying, all bruised and cut up... So he walked up to her *(walking up to Bo)* And grabbed her by the collar *(yanking Bo's collar, drawing close to Bo's face)* And whispered, "You're just as worthless as all this shit food and those fucking dishes."*(throwing Bo to the ground)* and then he threw her to the ground and *(kicking Bo forcefully, grunting between each word)* started kicking... her over... and over...

Bo lies on the ground in the fetal position, shaking and trying to deflect the blows. Lee, realizing what he's done, falls to his knees in front of the headstone with the rifle. He rests his arms on the stone and begins to cry. Bo rolls over, exposing a black eye and a bloody lip. He staggers up.

Bo: What the hell, man?

Lee: *(in between sobs)* I'm... sorry.

Bo: Sorry? You beat the crap out of me and think you can just say "sorry"?

Lee: *(pounding the headstone with each pronouncement)* I hate him, I hate him, I hate him.

Bo walks over to Lee, squatting down on the opposite side of

the headstone so that it forms a barrier between them. Bo places his hand on Lee's arm to comfort him.

Bo: Look, I'm glad you shot him.

Lee: *(looking up)* Really?

Bo: *(chuckling)* Yeah, he was a real asshole.

Lee smiles, as if it's the first time Bo has cussed or it's the first time they've agreed.

Bo: But you know what...

Lee: What?

Bo: *(whispering)* You're never gonna have the chance to hurt anyone else.

Leaping up and away from Lee, rifle in hand, Bo points the rifle at him, obviously uncomfortable handling a firearm. There's a loud "BANG" as a tombstone behind Lee explodes. The kickback throws Bo off balance, but only temporarily. He loads another round as Lee charges him. The boys struggle for the rifle, offering obscenities and swearing in exertion, pulling at the gun and pushing the other away like an intricate dance, each trying to gain control of the situation. Suddenly, the barrel points toward the audience. The boys gasp, and the lights cut to black as a resounding "BANG" fills the space.

Cat and Mouse

by Eric Hvidston

Characters:

Mr. C- CEO, mid-30's, recently divorced, uses "player" personality as mask

Darcie-Secretary, early 30's, happily married, fiery personality

Tony- Janitor, late 50's, waiting for Mr. C and Darcie to leave for the day

Setting:

Top floor office lobby, Boston (thick accents), 1930, February

Scene opens with a dark stage, a spotlight turns on and follows Mr. C walking into the lobby from his office next to Darcie's desk. He puts on his fedora and places his foot on the desk. As soon as he sets his foot on the desk, the stage lights flip on. Mr. C is wearing a white button up shirt with black suspenders and matching slacks. His freshly shined shoes gleam in the fluorescent light, in one hand is his briefcase, his coat draped over the same arm. Darcie is busily working away on her typewriter, wearing her brand new blue button up dress with pink roses embroidered all over it. Tony is sitting on a couch, chewing his pen over a crossword puzzle from yesterday's newspaper and humming the latest hits. His brown newsie conceals his face while he looks down, and his matching coat is over his shoulders. All noise stops when Mr. C speaks

Mr. C: Doty, I have a meeting tomorrow morning and I'll need my lovely secretary to type out the minutes... oh, and you can come too I suppose.

Darcie: Now Mr. C, you know my name is Darcie.

Mr. C: Yes but I much prefer Doty, or Dot. It keeps the mind running and the thoughts flowing.

Darcie: Oh Mr C, you are incorrigible.

Mr. C: Doty you foxy dame, how's the mister?

Tony (*who is once again zoned out and focused on his puzzle*): What's an 8 letter word for insincere interest?

(Darcie turns to face Tony)

Darcie: Unctuous.

Tony: Thank you Darcie.

(Darcie turns back to Mr. C)

Darcie: At least some men are still respectful nowadays.

Mr C: Well it is 1930 now, after all, some guys ought to be.

Darcie: But not you?

Mr. C: Ain't got the time doll.

Darcie: Ain't got the time or ain't got the wit?

Mr. C: Doty you fiery broad you. Did you happen to catch that sweet ad in the paper this morning, some nice little car for sale. I was thinking of buying it, you know. Might take it for a drive down to the beach.

Tony: Hey Darcie, what's a 10 letter word for someone who boasts? I think it starts with a B

(Darcie turns back to face Tony again)

Darcie: A blatteroon.

(Mr. C takes his foot off the desk and walks halfway to Tony)

Mr. C: Hey buddy, I swear if I walk over there and there ain't no damn crossword then I'll throw you outta here myself.

(Tony looks up from his puzzle, confused and unsure of what just happened)

Darcie: You better believe him Tony, he's all brawn and no brain.

(Tony begins to laugh but quickly silences himself when he sees the anger on Mr. C's face, Mr. C turns to face Darcie)

Mr. C: Is that so? Well Tony, haven't you heard that Doty here is all brains and no looks?

Darcie: Hey Mr. C, how're those divorce papers coming along?

Mr. C: You know what Dot!? I'm thinking of throwing you out too!

(Darcie stands and maintains eye contact with Mr. C)

Darcie: Hey Tony! You wanna know a 12 letter word for something that's worthless

Tony: Um... *(Tony is now flabbergasted, unsure what to think, do, or say)*

Darcie: Cumberground. *(Mr. C and Darcie are now in each others faces)*

Mr. C: It's funny you're wearing those roses, cause you sure ain't no flower!

Darcie: What does Mr. C stand for again? Crow? Coward? Cretan! Crap!

Mr. C: C'mon Dot, you women are all the same. Get your head on straight or I'll fire you and hire that canary in the corner club down the block.

Darcie: What was the reason she's leaving you again? Huh? Mr. Crook.

(At that, Mr. C looks at the ground, now feeling more insecure. Darcie had struck a nerve)

Mr. C: Doty you know my name is Cook...

Darcie: You're a coward Mr. C! A caitiff!

(A brief silence as the clock outside strikes 5 o'clock)

Mr. C: Darcie, please...

(Darcie takes a deep breath in and out, then smirks at Mr. C)

Darcie: You ain't worth the trouble. Toots. I gotta get home and make supper for the kids. Besides, we've been playing this game for five years now, when are you gonna learn this cat has claws?

(Darcie grabs her coat off the the back of her chair, puts it on, and starts walking off stage. Mr. C adjusts his tie and stands up straight, looking back up at Darcie)

Mr. C: See you tomorrow Dot, 8am sharp for that meeting.

Darcie: As always Mr. C, as always.

(the stage lights shut off and a spotlight follows Darcie off stage)





Interactive Lines #1
Clare Haenni



Martin Luther King Jr.
Elizabeth Bath



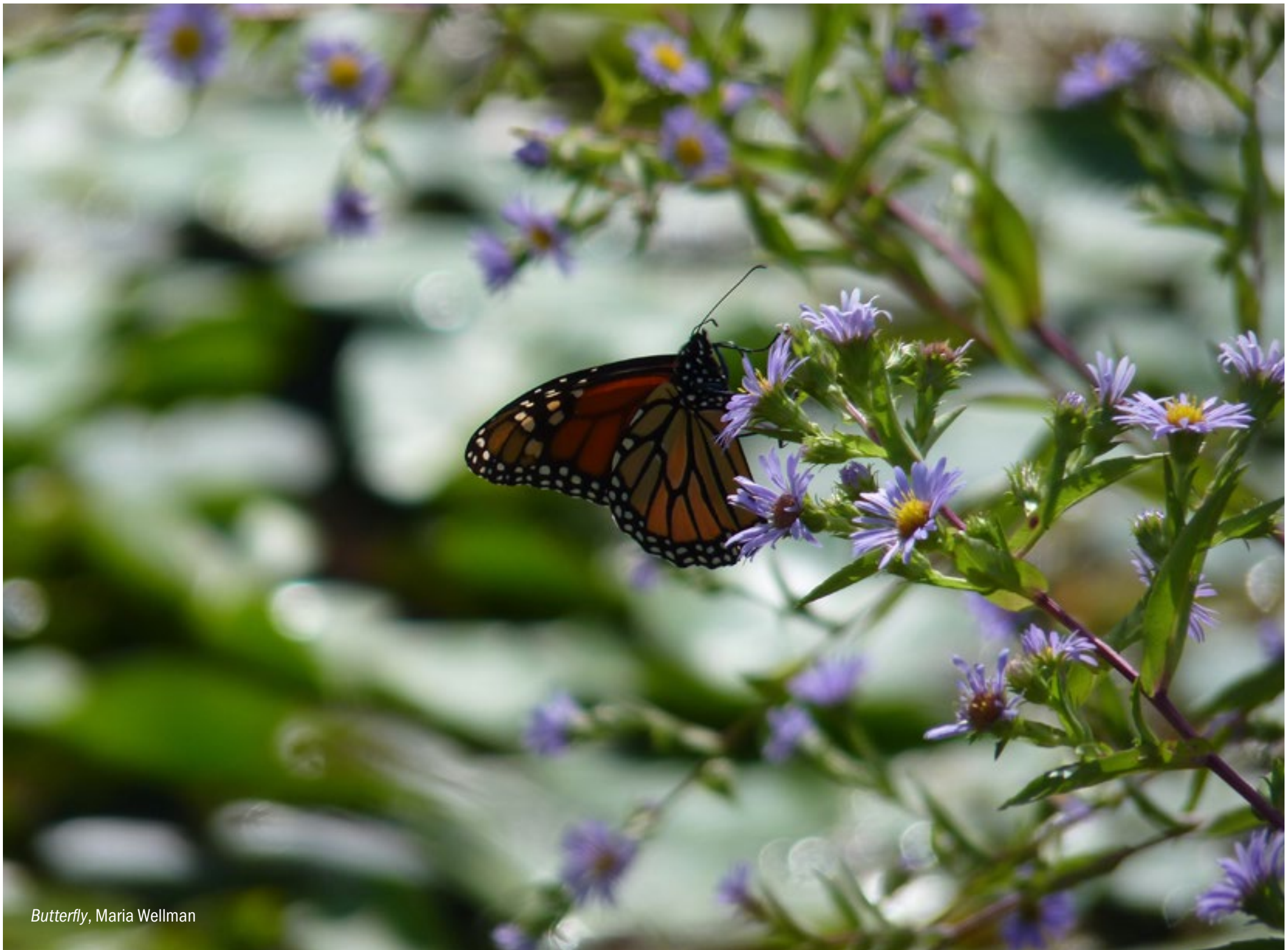
Adventurous, Colleen Schena



Interactive Lines #2
Clare Haenni



Grace Harmon



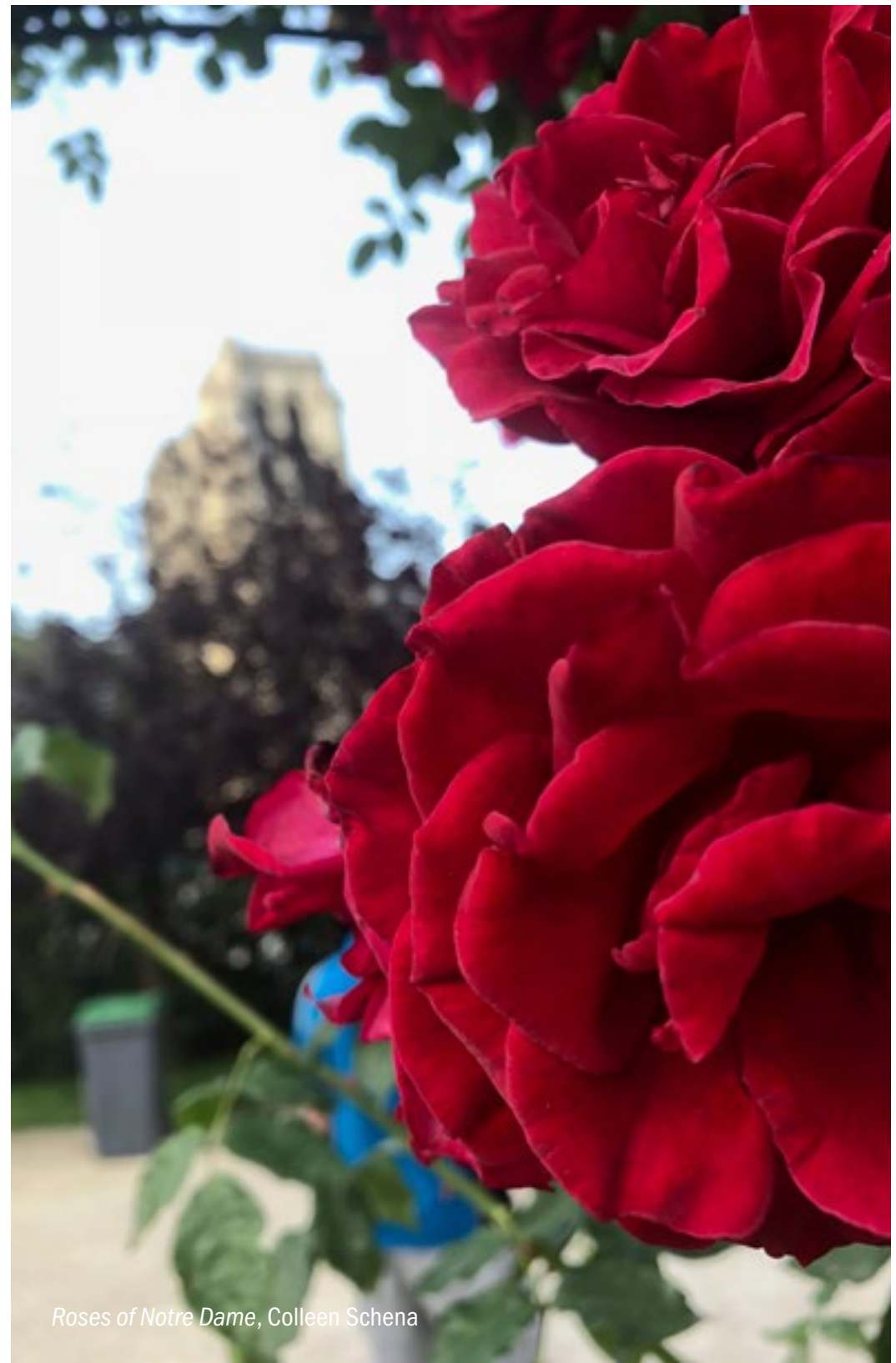
Butterfly, Maria Wellman



Tea House, Yvette Clemons



Interactive Lines #3
Clare Haenni



Roses of Notre Dame, Colleen Schena



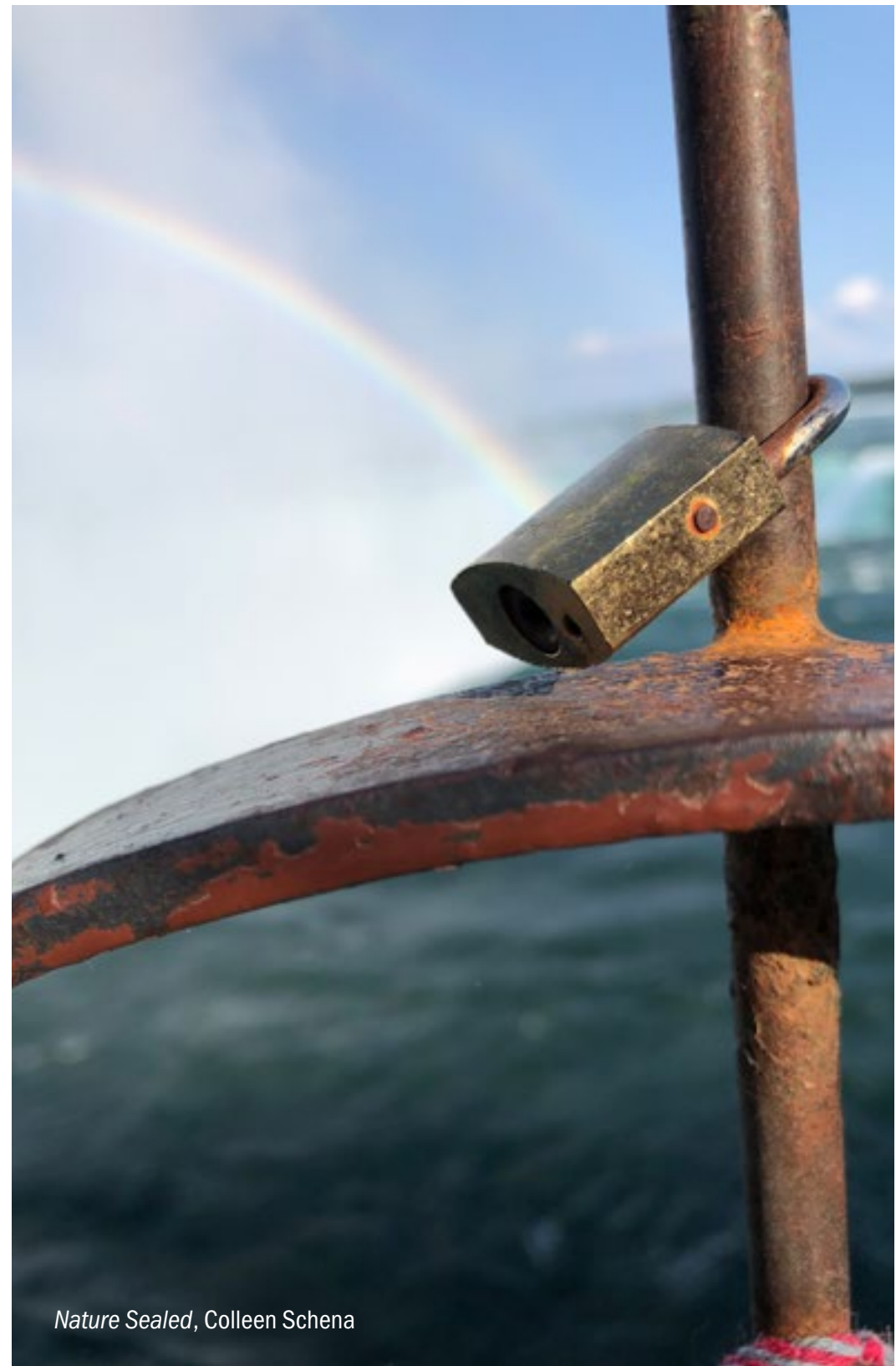
The Alleyway, Connor Miller



A Night in Paris, Elizabeth Bath



Interactive Lines #4
Clare Haenni



Nature Sealed, Colleen Schena



Cathedral Vaults, Connor Miller



Spider, Maria Wellman



Grace Harmon



Personal Palette
Clare Haenni



Vaults in the Round, Connor Miller



Curve Tree, Maria Wellman



To the Heavens, Connor Miller



Cambridge Canal, Connor Miller