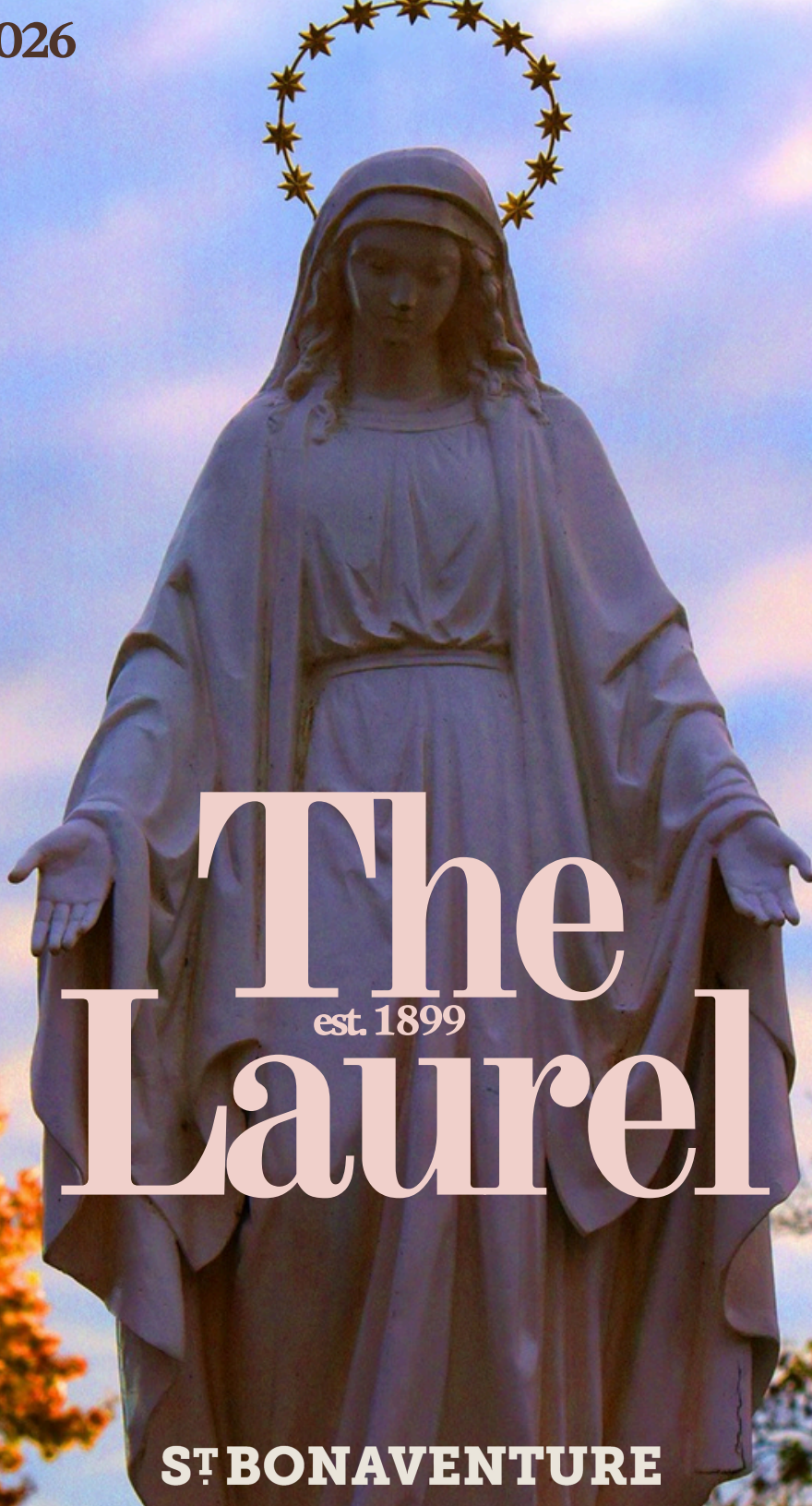


Spring 2026

Vol. 127



The est. 1899 Laurel

ST BONAVENTURE

“We hope to make The Laurel worthy of its name by keeping it in a flourishing condition. We hope, above all, that its leaves will always appear green.” - Introductory, The Laurel Vol. 1, No. 1 (1899)

Table of contents

Cover Photo.....ALEXIS GARMONG.....	1
Photograph: The Way Home.....ABIGAIL TABER.....	4
Plantae.....MARY QUINN MCNAUGHTON.....	5
Photograph and poem.....1970 EDITION.....	5
Exhibition.....LAUREN NEYMAN.....	6
The Laurel artwork.....2001 EDITION.....	6
People Kissing.....1970 EDITION.....	7
One Day They'll Clone A Poem.....TOM KRAMPF 2001.....	7
La Lomita Chapel.....CAROLINE EDDY.....	7
Background: Melancholy.....ABIGAIL TABER.....	8
Song of the Wild.....LINCOLN COUNIHAN.....	8
Art: St. Bona Writers.....MELINDA WOHLER.....	8
Flower Language.....DR. CAITLIN SMITH.....	9
The Allegheny Rises.....LINCOLN COUNIHAN.....	9
Universe.....ANONYMOUS.....	10
Hope is Heavy.....ANONYMOUS.....	10
Use Your Brain.....ANONYMOUS.....	10
A Very Hungry Caterpillar.....ANONYMOUS.....	10
Photograph: Geese in the Distance.....DRAVEN JAGODA.....	10
Memories.....ANONYMOUS.....	11
Some Childhood Snippets.....TANNER PASI.....	11
“Why Do You Fear the Stars?”.....ANNMARIE TRUESDELL.....	12
AT2024tvd.....LUKA GALLE.....	12
Barefoot Cabernet Sauvignon.....LUKA GALLE.....	13-14
St. Bonas Baseball Field.....MARY QUINN MCNAUGHTON.....	13-14

Vine artwork on pages 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 30, 32 inspired by Ethan Atwood

in Fall 2001 edition by ABIGAIL TABER

Artwork on pages 11, 12, 15, 16, 24, 26, 27 by MELINDA WOHLER

Art: Friedsam in Black.....1966 WINTER EDITION.....	14
Photograph: Pink Sky.....ABIGAIL TABER.....	15
Wintering.....ABIGAIL TABER.....	15
“Would You Still Love Me If I Were a Worm?”ANONYMOUS.....	15
The Mess We Skip.....KATHRYN ANDREWS.....	16-17
Laurel Crest.....ARCHIVE.....	17
Photograph and poem: Beach.....1970 EDITION.....	18
Autofill.....L.L.....	19
Art: Chickadee with Laurel.....TESSA NATALE.....	19
Familiarity and Frigidity.....RILY RZEPKA.....	20
Art: Dev in Black.....1966 WINTER EDITION.....	20
Everyone You Know.....DR. TARA WALKER.....	21
Artwork.....1967 WINTER EDITION.....	21
Background: Drive.....ABIGAIL TABER.....	22-23
The Agar.....SN.....	22-23
Lights.....ABIGAIL TABER.....	24
Background: Heaven’s Limelight.....CAIT GANGI.....	24
Love will find you living.....LUKA GALLE.....	25
Exercise the Ego.....EMMA GAVAZZI.....	26-27
Artwork: Butterfly Doodles.....TESSA NATALE.....	28
What Remains.....TARUSHI TRIPATHI.....	28
Bathroom Lights.....MW.....	28
Background: Valley.....ABIGAIL TABER.....	29
Beg.....TESSA NATALE.....	29
The Stranger.....JARED JOHNSON.....	29
Writers.....EMMA LAVERDI.....	30
A Poem for Grandma.....ROSE PFEIFFER.....	31
Petri Dish Paradox.....SN.....	32
Photograph: Apathy Has No Place at Bonas.....1965 EDITION.....	33
Photograph: Mt. Irenaeus.....ISABEL MARZULLO.....	33
Photograph Collage.....ABBEY, ELSA , ROSE, RILEY, CAIT, HOLDEN....	33
Photograph: IR of St. Joseph’s Oratory.....DR. DENNY WILKINS.....	34
Editor’s Note.....ABIGAIL TABER.....	35
Back Cover: Plassmann.....JEROME PAWLAK FROM 1981.....	36

Spring 2026

Plantae

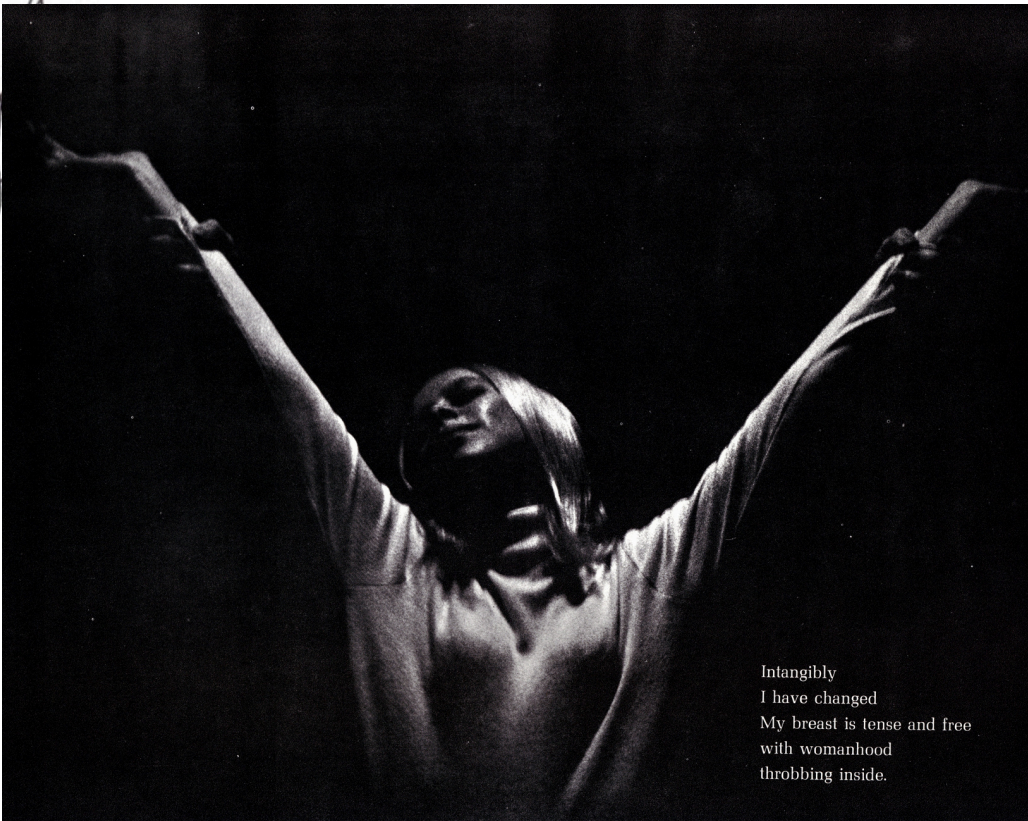
Bone to fascia to skin
to dirt

Earth beneath discounted hiking boots

There is a Woman in the wood
ahead and
She is wearing all white

Underdressed, lost sheep
Lilies bloom, rhizomes intertwine, where the
fabric of Her dress hits her ankle

Under May sun
She does not tell me to dig for a spring,
but through Her i am reborn.



Intangibly
I have changed
My breast is tense and free
with womanhood
throbbing inside.

Exhibition

An ancient creature, a shadowed figure
skin rough from years of beating sun
dusty earth, sleepless nights.

Yet smooth,
like the surface of a stone
polished by years of restless waves;
unrelenting, but secure.

Colors bright; seeping
made by a mind in existence
many millennia after my own.

Oh, shadowed figure, do you wish you lived in the world
I once knew?
the dense foliage, survival;
nothing and everything all at once.

Years ago you found me,
buried under layers of life and death,
success and failure,
peace and chaos.

Most of me is an imagined guess,
a hypothesis of a time never known,
yet here I stand.

With you, this way for a reason
and suddenly all those centuries
of forgotten memories
dissipate.

My form may change,
but meaning persists.
Shadowed figure,
I turn my face to the sun.





One Day They'll Clone A Poem

One day they'll clone a poem.

One day with a pair of tweezers they'll remove
the nucleus of a verb.

With the sperm of an adverb one day they'll replace it
and implant the egg within a grammatical placenta.

Then multiplying in cells conjunctions will walk around
and scratch their ruffled and unkempt hair.

Then will march periods, commas, and dashes up and down
a paragraph's surly lines

and for those who dissent, they'll beat them unmercifully.

One day they'll clone a poem.

One day they'll clone a poem and then there'll be no more song.

There'll be no more song until from the dark raises its head
some wayward adjective into the sun.

Then perhaps it'll join hands with a pronoun and it'll start all
over again.



Location: La Lomita Chapel in Mission, TX

Built in 1865

"La Lomita Chapel is a historic Catholic chapel in Mission, Texas. It was once an important site for the Cavalry of Christ, a group of priests who traveled long distances on horseback to minister to Catholics living on isolated ranches along the Rio Grande."

Song of the Wild

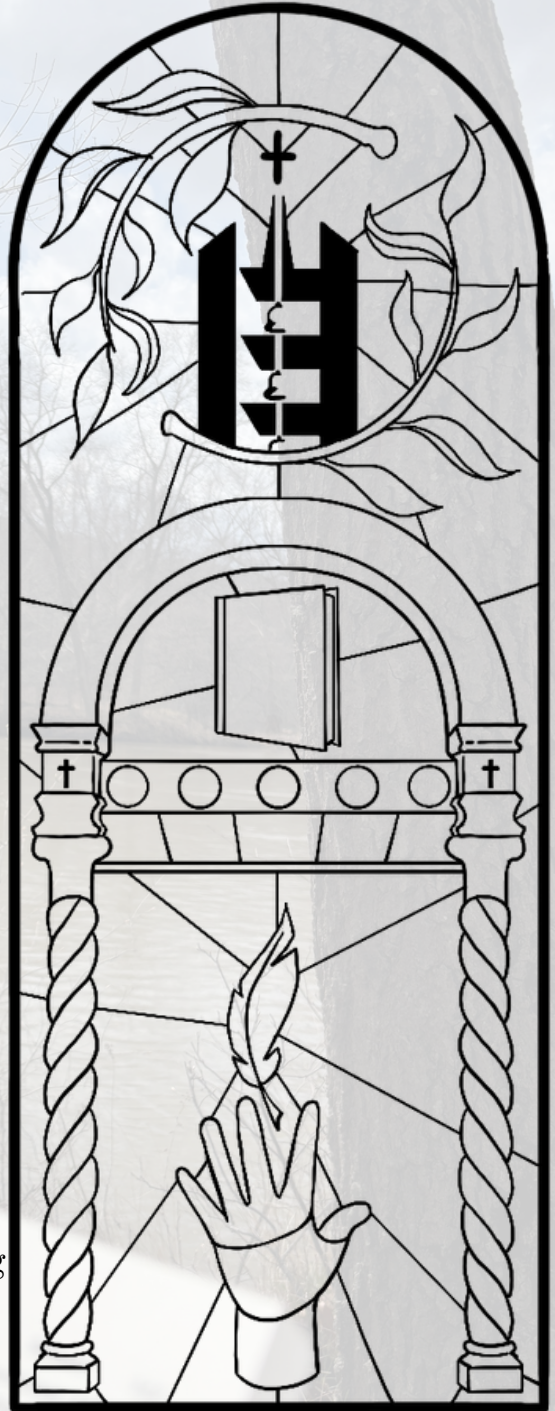
Like a child, he sits in the mud—alone
Soaked with the sodden earth and curled up in a ball
He cries

His legs hurt and
there's mud under his fingernails
The air is cold; the sun goes down
Alone with only the trees and their leaves
Streams roll by—they always do
The wind brings flowers, but not for too long
An old oak tree lies on its side
Mud soaks into his brand-new shoes
One flower grew old and her legs got sick;
she rides away with the wind
He loves to be alone

A song plays in the wild
He uncurls at the sound
The beauty rings true,
while the source is unknown
The leaves wish to wither no more

As for inquiries into its melody or rhythm
Its title and all
Silence
There is no composer

Yet the world was filled with this nameless song
His heart would bleed the hue of its soul
All alone, the mud consumes him
and the wind blows on
He cries not for the wild, but because of its song

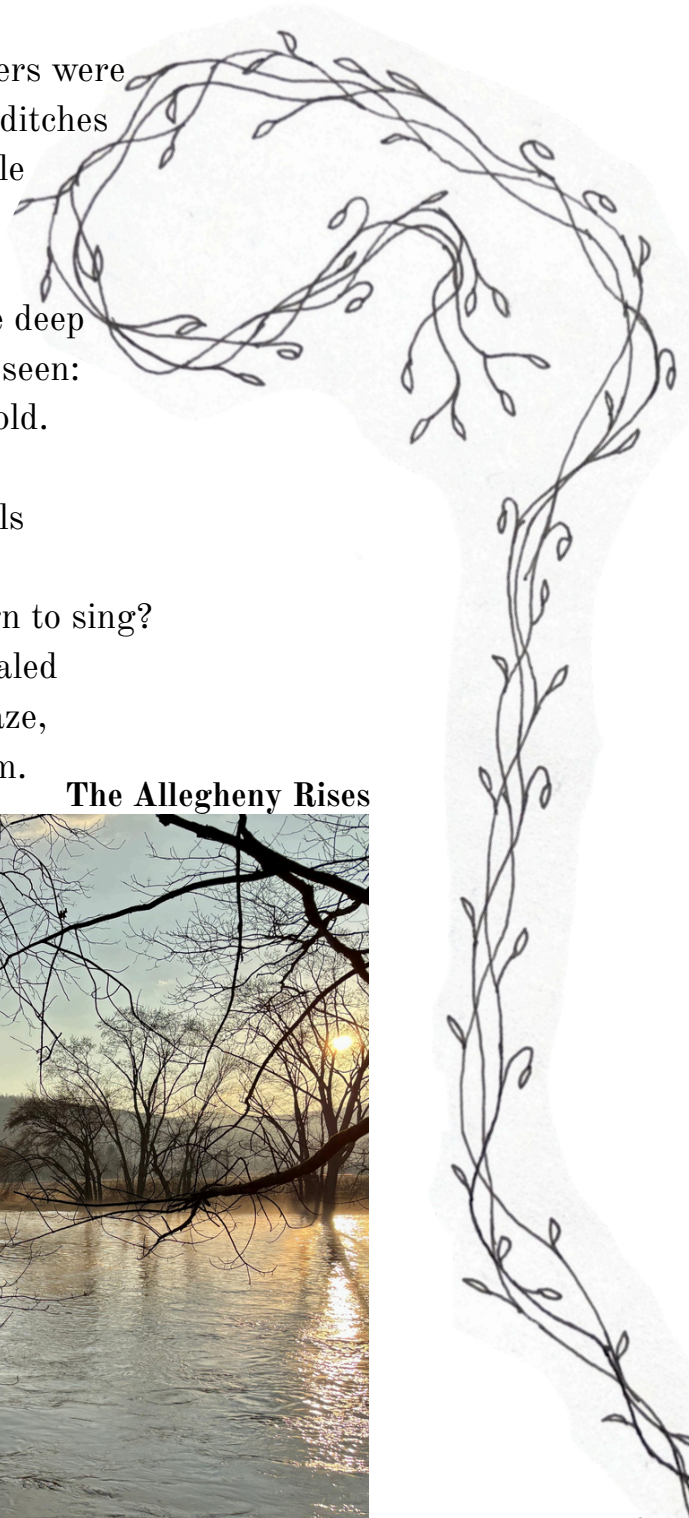


Flower Language

The textbook told us Shakespeare's flowers were
In their own time, but common weeds in ditches
We sucked our teeth. It seemed impossible
His little western flowers? Rue, witches'
Hemlock, Gillyvors, Oxlips, Marigolds
These, mere inglorious? The names were deep
The things themselves, not one had ever seen:
The strangeness was poetic, strong and old.

The summer stink of sweat and firewheels
Or Black-eyed Susans' pollen in the haze
Of heat and work, what muse would deign to sing?
Sprout, cigarettes! Laud litter shred impaled
Snarl wire! Rust, rioting in bloomless maze,
Coiled to catch some hapless poet's dream.

The Allegheny Rises



Universe

My head creates universe
Overwhelmed with color,
Drowned in laughter.
But here I sit,
Dim and dull.
What do I do now?

Use Your Brain

I am

Awake Scared Aware

Of With For

Why My What

Has Judgement Thought

Running Taken Is

Over Passed Away

Thinking

A Very Hungry Caterpillar

My stomach is growling
Calling to be fed
The food isn't enough
I need to taste the flesh
To feel skin rip and bones break
To hear yells and see them running
Good be afraid
This caterpillar eats apathy.

Hope is Heavy

You tell me I am too happy
Too hopeful
Because you think I am naïve
But my hope is scarred
And my joy is laced with cuts
Because I have dragged them with me
This is my choice
I will not let you take them



Memories

They say to savor our time
Remember each moment
Live in the present
But I never learned how
Never got to experience life
As anything but the past
Slipping away before I can catch it
Fleeting emotions slipping past too
Leaving me numb
And alone
And unaware
And alone
Where did my life go?
I am so much older
There is so much left
I feel so unsure
And alone
And weird
And lonely
But there are so many people
Yet they have already moved
Slipping past with my life
The memories slipping too
Where am I
Who am I
What am I doing
Who am I
Who am I
Who am I

Some Childhood Snippets

Consciousness

In the corner of
a garage, my eyes open.
Then it went away.
Gray bricks, white door, wrinkly folks,
yellow linens, all singing.

That Cow

I quivered behind
the faux fig tree when that cow
raised her head to moo.
Horrors in the living room
conjured by *Little Einstein's*.

Converse

The Macy's girl said,
"The first basketball players
wore these." Dad still refused.
I was certain they would have
turned me into LeBron James.

Abstinence

Father said to fast
one hour before Eucharist.
I did eleven.
Just wanted to play it safe—
made sure Jesus would love me.

Just Be Kind

In the fourth grade, I
asked, "Mom, how do I make friends?"
She said, "Just be kind."
A dialogue of failures
because hatred tramples us.

“Why do you fear the stars?”

Why would I fear the stars?
Tiny twinkles of hope,
That darkness conceals.

Why would I fear the stars?
Glaring down every night,
A million eyes on the prize.

Why would I fear the stars?
When they hold what I'll never have,
The prize I'll never win.

Why would I fear the stars?
When rockets exist,
And they were never the limit.

the universe rehearsed, stars collapsed,
planets ached around suns stretching so
thin, we understood longing correctly.
i would endure a thousand lifetimes
scattered across galaxies. if one
granted me a moment in your gravity.
ancient atoms remember clusters of cosmos
where we almost were aligned. so i
rewrote stardust as background radiation
to prove that i was here.
endured the heat death, forging worlds and collapses of everything i am
the universe is cruel,
it knows the precise proximity you must be where
we can be close but untouched.
i have loved you in many ways that never asked permission.
quietly. patiently.
space holds soundless screams, signal lost in the miracle of movement,
i hope the stars glow wherever you are
and you think of me when the moon chases your car.
the enormity of my fondness is embarrassingly entrapping.

if i were a star and you were a star,
i would shimmer and wink at you,
and some little earthling astrologist would call.
it is a scientific miracle.

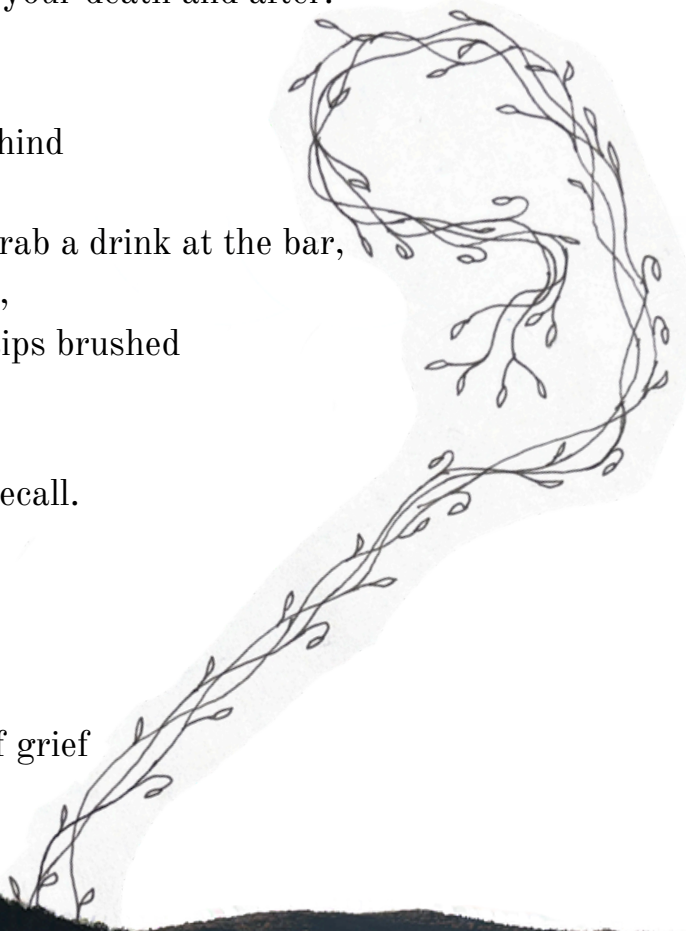
AT2024tvd

Barefoot Cabernet Sauvignon

the apartment on N Second Street falls silent
with wine-stained lips, holding a frame fondly.
i rarely drink cabernet anymore but when i do, i itch to ring you.
admittedly, i leave scratches in your spirit, i cannot let it be.
i'd resurrect you in trade for my reality.

forty-eight weeks and forty-nine versions of me have come about,
summarized almost biblically—before your death and after.
in the dozen lives i've endured since,
the memory of you refused to follow
me into a resting grave. it lingered behind
like you.
you'll forever remain barely legal to grab a drink at the bar,
but we laughed at the dive in Toronto,
you passed me a Marlborough, fingertips brushed
the heat radiated off your body.

beeping, guttural, awareness, this is recall.
memorizing your fingerprint.
i need to identify you—
reality.
this is temporary.
hallucinations are the weirdest kind of grief
here, i can mourn something that is.



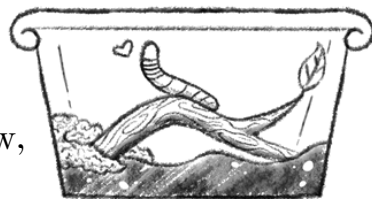
i see you slipping into smoke.
please another minute, please one moment in this atmosphere,
please give me time for mental screenshots, fondness,
memorizing the light and the way
it hits your nose. before i awake,
i know the void will be brutal as soon as the haze wears off.
i am going to miss this, knowing ruins the moment.
i want to suffocate in this sight
you are breathing, you are colourful, you are alive
i cannot stay here. but come visit again in my dreams,
the porch light will always be left on.





Wintering

You remind me of a cold winter night
Wrapped up in a blanket that has become
Both a beacon and a noose. Your heat assaults my skin
And leaves me restless, unkempt, and sweaty; skin slick
With the ache bleeding out of my pores.
Tomorrow, it will rain. It will wipe the ground clean. Tomorrow,
I'll regret begging for sun. Sweat dries.



“Would You Still Love Me If I Were a Worm?”

You ask the question with a laugh
And I laugh back that I would build you a terrarium
With everything a worm could want
Because what you don't know
Is that you have been everything to me since we met
I knew all those years ago that I needed you in my life
In any way you were willing
Because I cannot think of any version of you
That does not hold my heart
So whether you were a worm or my biggest fear
I would find a way to make you happy
Because I love you
In every universe



The Mess We Skip

Modern Disconnection

"My flowers and birds are ready for spring. Why can't we just skip over the mess."
No.

The flowers and birds are spring.

The mess is what becomes summer.

It is easy to overlook deeper connections in nature.

Especially the small.

The commonplace.

Messiness is not meaningless.

It's essential.

It's the very process by which life renews itself
and beauty returns.

Do we misunderstand nature?

Or do we misunderstand process?

I understand this now.

I didn't always.

I used to want to skip it too.

Institutional Childhood

What we call childhood today
is not natural.

It is an institutional construct optimized for systems
not children.

Developmental and biological needs
are increasingly ignored.

Learning routinely treated
as an outcome.

Misaligned learning conditions are the mechanism.

Institutional childhood is the outcome.

Starting Points

So many people I know make the same mistake.

Young and old.

Personal to professional.

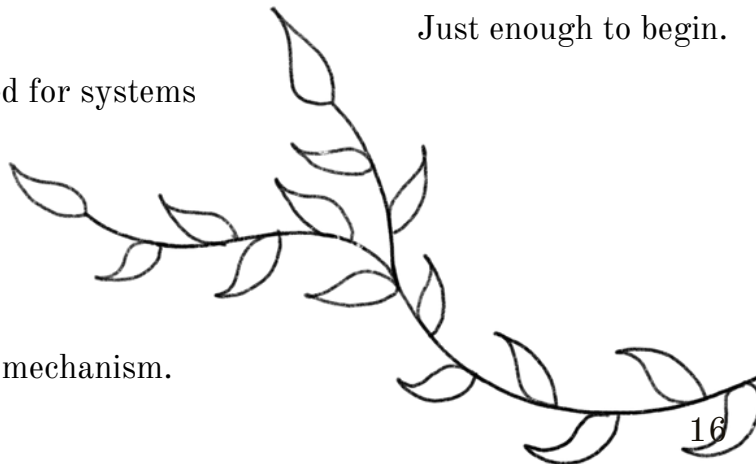
They get stuck before starting.

Know the purpose of starting points.

Like the choke on a weed wacker.

One quick action to get started.

That's it.
Just enough to begin.



Institutional Agents

Pedagogy as compilation.

Not pedagogy as reasoning.

A never-ending accumulation of tools, resources, trainings without regard to children's developmental needs.

Professional judgement develops through repeated, structured, and conceptually coherent practice not through exposure to more materials.

How We Begin

We all have choices.

One avoids the mess.

One works through it.

How can you get stuck in something you never started?

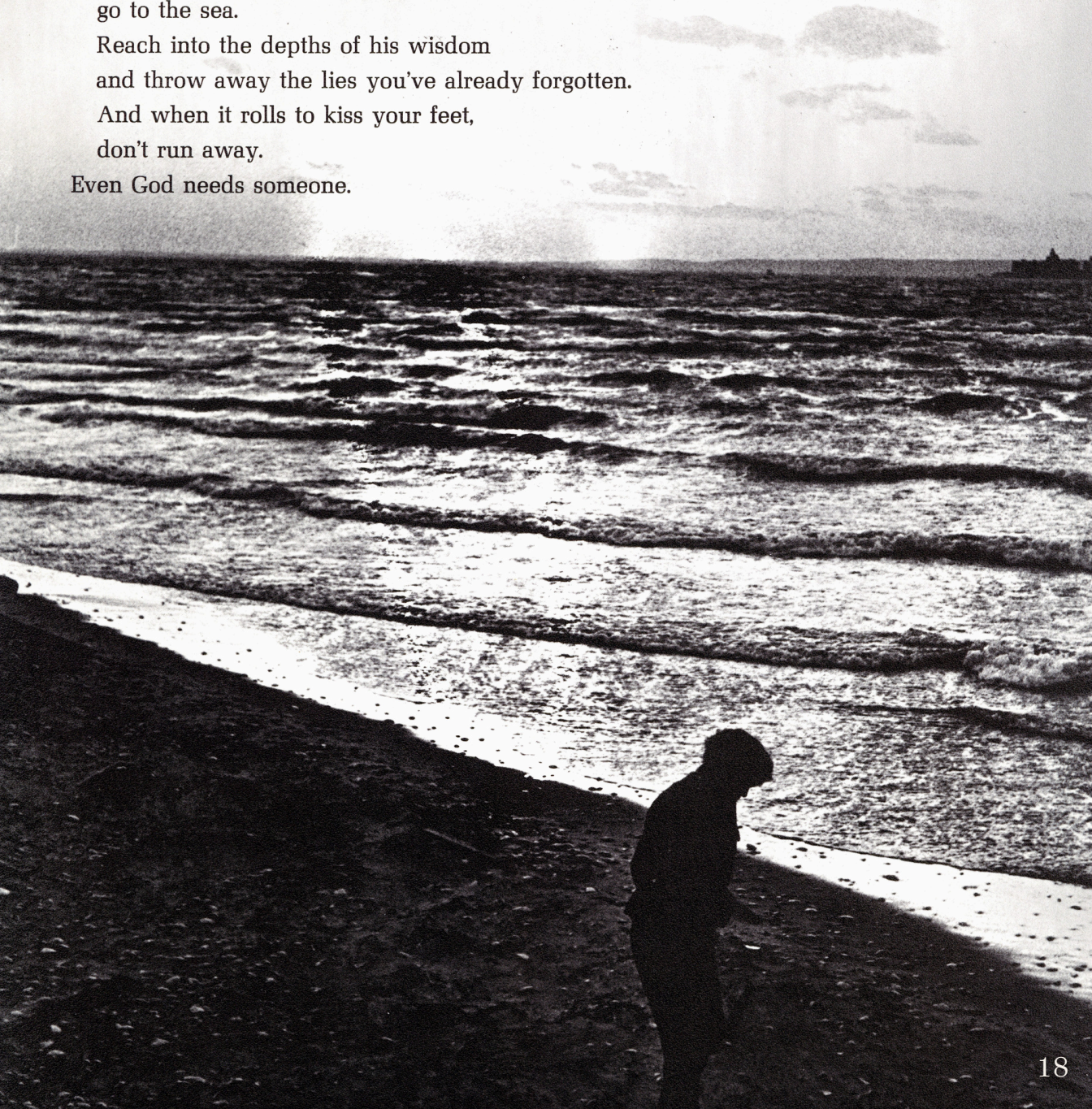
TO ENCOURAGE



INTEREST IN

LITERARY PURSUITS

Next time you want to talk to someone
because you feel
that maybe they'll somehow understand
and know what it is
to miss a love by only love,
go to the sea.
Reach into the depths of his wisdom
and throw away the lies you've already forgotten.
And when it rolls to kiss your feet,
don't run away.
Even God needs someone.



Autofill

and sometimes my phone reminds me of who I used to be
a never labeled man who somehow still has a name in my phone

and it's strange
that his name follows me in silent numbers
and reminders

maybe it would be easier to forget him
if I made him forgettable data
deleted the photos
erased the proof of us

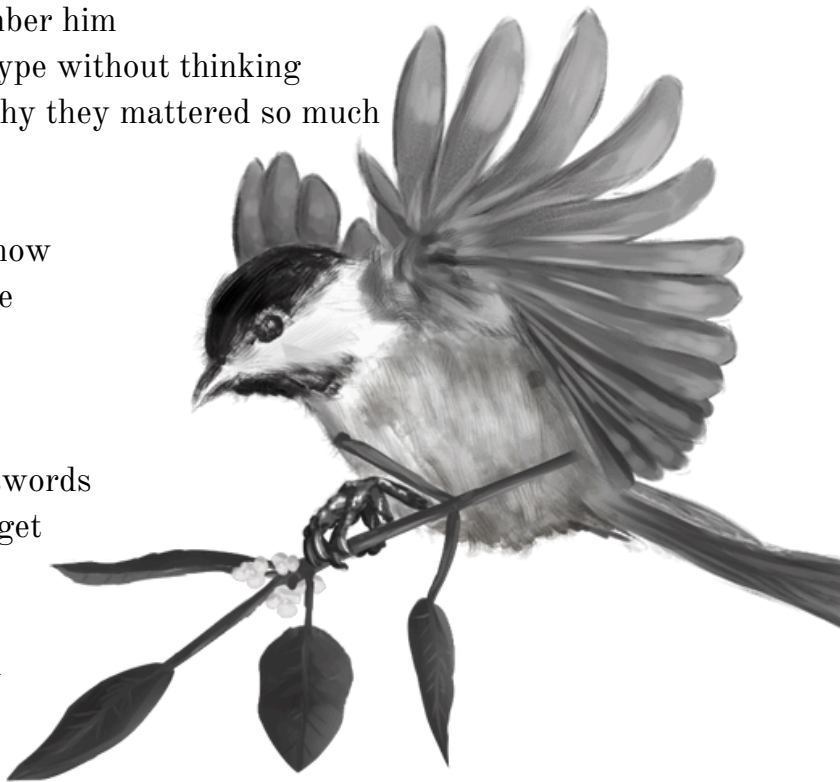
but my brain is wired to remember him
like passwords my hands still type without thinking
even when I don't remember why they mattered so much

I keep the pictures
even though I only skim them now
like they belong to someone else
and I wait to feel something
but nothing comes

all the reminders of us are passwords
easier to remember and not forget

for if I was to change them
I'd go back to my old password
and get frustrated I changed it

but am I frustrated because I can't remember my new password
or because I lost something I remembered?
the convenience of having something to remember
without all the loss involved



Familiarity and Frigidity

The smell of my mom's perfume on another woman
Finds me off guard and aching with sleep
An empty seed pod blowing in the snow, crushed
By a girl who does not yet know how similar they are
The squeak of tires against snow sounds like screams
A path paved for me to walk, the sides high with packed powder
Untouched by footsteps
Walls I could easily jump,
But not without getting wet and cold.
Something runs down my face, snot, sweat, or tears
I cannot tell
The only warmth comes from deep within my chest
And even then, I can tell it's fading
Salt has stained my shoes,
How long was I at sea?
Have I done enough?
Everything feels harsher, more disciplined, in the frigid morning sun
I hunger for more,
But I have not the fuel to keep reaching for it



Everyone You Know

is a caged-up dancer
is a sullen anchor
is a pain in the ass
and if you have chosen to love them
the same is true but with more weight.

Everyone you know
is dangling by the last strength in their
little finger
is living on borrowed time

has set a New Years resolution to lose
10 pounds
is hiding a secret pair of jeans to wear
the day their body changes

Everyone You Know

forgot their keys this morning
feels the bristles of the leg hair poking through
their socks
has a list of unwritten thank you notes that goes
back years
is a kleptomaniac for memories.

Everyone you could possibly fall in love with
carries around a bunch of bullshit: letters and
birthday cards, paperclips and used plastic
cups, newspaper headlines and coupons and dead
batteries.

Everyone knows these things are meaningless.
And everyone carries them anyway.



if i looked at you, decipher really, through a
microscopic lens,
i would see the foundation shivering, pathetic.

each insecurity neatly arranged in their cages, secluded.
hidden behind parties, lies, not congruent.

your creation entirely relies on lies embedded with betrayal.

you were nineteen:

paying for your first tattoo, etched into the same skin that you were ashamed of at seventeen.

sobbing on the communal shower floor, you survived the boy who suffocated you for years.

failing a college course, it was supposed to be a study sesh,
so why is he giving you Plan B.
getting criticized by the stranger who generationally, cannot counsel you.

let's be realistic, this is repeated behavior.

you were twenty:

getting another tattoo, tears don't form. the needle softer than your
usual flame for pain.

begging your dealer, what else is going to make you feel something.
 passing the course, aided by your metal grinder and a makeshift bong.
 making appearances, but never really letting yourself be present.

let's be realistic, you were made to be this way. so, let's rewind.

you were ten:
hating your brother for something you didn't have the words to name yet.
getting titled as a liar
for the first time, she actually means it.
bullied for your thighs, so naturally you pick up the lighter
burn away the fat.
writing in notebooks, you learn that trust is optional in retrospect.

let's be realistic, this isn't normal. so, you cut your hair.

you were sixteen:
straying away from your friends all because of a boy.
ostracizing yourself, bad idea.
learning what the internet truly holds, if there's an angle,
there is a way.
learning to lie, cuts can be hidden
as easily as your diary six years ago.
let's be realistic, he was never looking AT YOU anyways.
so, let's fast forward.

present day
opening your notes,
“dizzy in your
passenger seat,
her seat”

Lights

We're never getting
older. Everybody is
evolving but us.

There is no space for
indifference between us
and the flashing lights.

Lights, lust, levity
is all I can offer you.
What can you give me?

Rushed moments in the
back of a too-small car with
your foot on the gas.

Stuck in a moment
between elation and hate.
Bring me back from here.

Hedonistic touch
turns to anticlimactic
faking of pleasure.

Sharing a bed makes
waking up easier but
sneaking out too hard.

Grounded by a hand
leaving bruises on my hip.
I remain quiet

I cannot give you
the satisfaction of how
desperate I am

To steal your notice.
I exist outside of your
gaze but not my need.

Love will find you living.

it cannot dance with you if you are not on the dance floor,
it cannot bake you a cake if you are not celebrating things,
Love cannot find you if you are sorrowful.

there is nothing wrong with you
if you want to see the good in
others and stayed for that reason.
did anyone talk to you about that?

did anyone say that you should give that
Love back to yourself? you shouldn't leave
that with them, like a tupperware dish still
filled with sweets. take it with you.

you are not a dog
waiting for it's owner
to return from work. you should bring it back with
Love and still smelling like peanut butter.

just because the dog yelped, doesn't
mean you cannot give it a loving home.
let it exist in your guest bedroom for awhile.
you are not wrong or bad because you saw
sweetness in them or you saw salvation
possible in the promises, you knew the good could be there,
and that means you are hopeful and right in the heart,
i think.

you outpoured so much Love from yourself and
you need to receive it back tenfold.

Exercise the Ego

the last phase of the emperor.

St. Helena, pray for me—

no, the island;

erosion of confinement

to be stared upon,

never seen.

posterity, behold a wretch like me,

the idiot knows not of posterity.

time, tyrannical

youth being currency.

dragged and mottled

in the wake of my undoing;

impetus: calamitous, accidental, mine;

a ragdoll to giants becoming.

my executioner's mirth,

mine eyes vacant, unseeing,

veiled by shame which

I do not carry,

cloaked by betrayal.

a good man is

a good man is

a good man is

no man to exist.

neck meet block;

last rites from a cleric,

no matter.

excise the ego.

the blade was not swift

but rather dull, choppy, persistent.

when the deed is done

jowls snare,
teeth are licked,
here be the blood you demand;
the head of the beast—

pretty once?,
surely wicked,
raised to the crowd
who yell "hear, hear!"

disembodied I watch from my new hell
forsaken because
the path of least resistance.

the fish rots from the head;
cowardice endemic
and courage not oft to be found
north of the serf's station.

how can one be born
from a hearth
with flame for
hands and tongue?
and what curse upon her
demanded their use,
insists would you
please listen once?

all creatures
endowed with a hint of divinity—
save me.

time is indifferent to the human plight.

to burn every bridge ever built,
leaving no way to cross the water
but to walk upon it.

is the half-life of mercy so short.
the essence of things
past,
never passed.

hearts bleed like pens;
to speak, to die.

a fair is a gathering for clowns and children.
fair, adjective:
vague, empty;
a word that means the opposite,
that is to say
a paradox of itself
and myself
under roofs of
despotic terracotta
wherein my ambling
is outlawed.

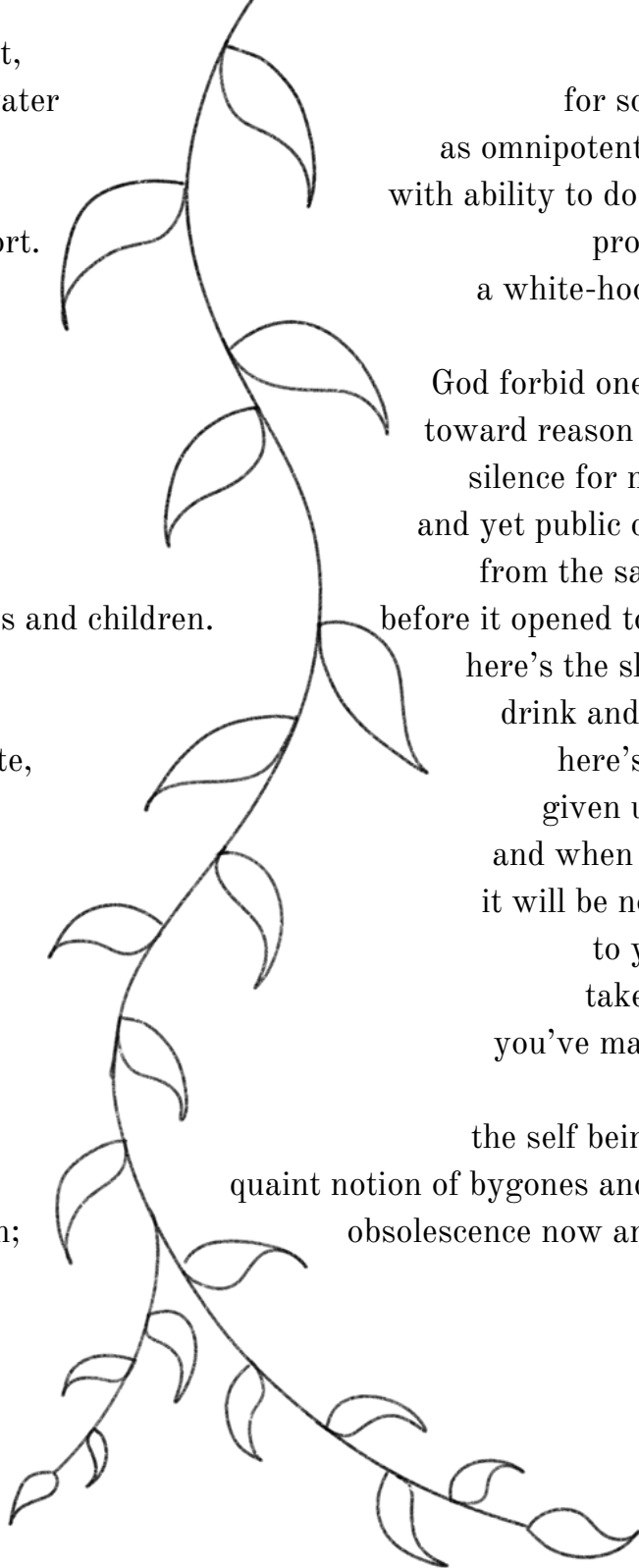
I look down from my cell
to the center of the panopticon;
there, a silhouette,
proud and dumb and
craven.

the Sanhedrin once
paid thirty pieces of silver
for an alleged capricorn.

I was sold
for social credit
as omnipotent recreants
with ability to do otherwise
prostituted to
a white-hooded class.

God forbid one be biased
toward reason and truth;
silence for my privacy
and yet public castigation
from the same mouth
before it opened to my ear...
here's the slaughter—
drink and be merry!
here's the body,
given up for you.
and when I do atone
it will be not for this.
to your grave
take the name
you've made for me.

the self being archaic,
quaint notion of bygones and bygones;
obsolescence now and forever,
amen



What Remains

There are moments
that feel brighter than they should.

Nothing about them differs on the surface.
The same rooms, the same noise, the same
passing time.

And still, something shifts.

It happens in small ways.
The air alters for a second,
as if something has settled into it,
without asking to be noticed.

A presence lingers quietly,
as if it belongs there.

It is not marked in the moment.
There is no reason for it to be.

Only later does it return.

Not as anything distinct,
only a feeling that persists
longer than it should,
like warmth that remains
after everything else has slipped away.

Memory does this. Some things are easier left as they are,
It returns in familiar ways,
settling into the same quiet corners,
as if it had been waiting there all along
Like a presence that remains, long after it was meant to leave.



Bathroom Lights

People, sounds, dizziness.
You don't know what it's called,
But you've felt it before.
The last time it left you heaving
On the bathroom floor.

And all I know, and all I know,
Is that the ghost in the mirror
Is of someone that you don't know.

Beyond the dark eyes, skin torn lips,
The broken fingernails that picked,
All you want to know is, "Who let the blood sit?"

You lie, saying you choose to see tomorrow,
While Death itself is begging you to live.
Try and reach out towards the sun,
Though you'll never make it out,
Not after everything you've done.

Don't you dare close your eyes,
Cuz if you do, then I'll shut mine.
I don't want to have to see in the dark,
I'd rather be blinded by your sunshine.

I leave it there.



Beg

Sir, sir please can't you see
I need the alluring tranquility

For five pennies?

You take me for a fool

I'd need to beg in streets

The price ain't enough fuel

Sir, sir please can't you see

I long to be free

Fleshy chains yank my knees,

I stumble in the dark

The weight can't be dissolved

Must be hung with a noose

Sir, sir please can't you see

I want to flee

Just one of many desperate bodies

With too much time stuffed inside

Let my malnourished hand ring the bell

And sit on your boat

Please, I'm forlorn

I long to be unborn

The only one with the aid

You are the unprayed.

Give me your solace

Stuck like discobolus

Don't look away

I cannot stay for one more day!

...Sir?

The Stranger

A command strip that has lost its stick

Once so connected

Now floated down to the darkness behind the

Dresser

Dark haired man in a dark profession

Death his closest coworker

His closest friend

A man of the night

Summoned by a ring

Tearing him from an unoccupied other life

Life of relaxation

Of rest

Of uninterrupted REM

A past life

A future life?

A better life

Instead, here he is

Deflecting grief with an emotional riot shield

Until the mask can slip in the dark cold room alone

Alone with silent guests

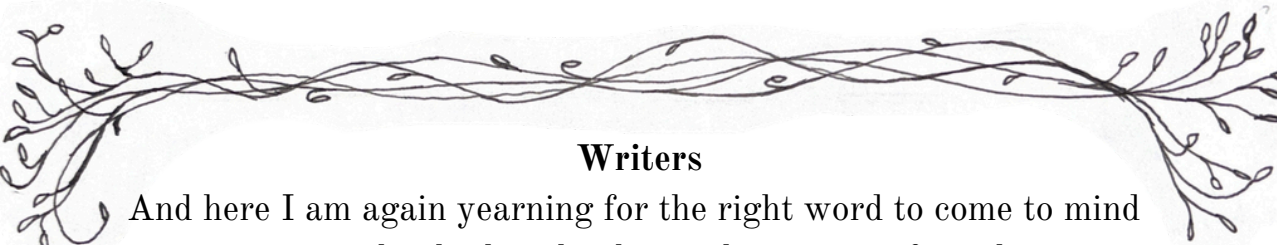
Who have no choice

But to listen

Here is where he is most known

And in this place, a frustrating comfortability

So, a stranger he stays



Writers

And here I am again yearning for the right word to come to mind
staring, ceaselessly, hopelessly at a bare piece of parchment.

A writer's life, imaginary worlds merge with reality
with just the right words on a piece of paper.

To bring my reader freedom, despair, and connection.

To send joy, you must find oneself within a world of words;
and here I am again yearning for the right word to come to mind.

Whispers from the soul inspire me as do those held dear
to create a magical place; escapism from here.

A writer's life, imaginary worlds merge with reality
with just the right words on a piece of paper.

One bears one's soul for all to see
heart lined out in ink and on printed paper; hours spent in quiet contemplation
and here I am again yearning for the right word to come to mind

The goal of inspiring others, to spread messages and meaning to the world.
Connecting our dystopian life with messages that give us hope for the future.

A writer's life, imaginary worlds merge with reality
with just the right words on a piece of paper.

Yet, I am lost
for I can no longer see the difference between reality and readings.
And here I am again yearning for the right word to come to mind;
a writer's life, imaginary worlds merge with reality
with just the right words on a piece of paper.

A Poem for Grandma

For an instant, the winter has settled.
I took a walk that awakened my thoughts.
So, I started writing poems and somehow
My thoughts wandered to you.

Messages each Monday,
I rarely know what to say in moments
But I'm far better with letters,
So, I'm trying to return them to you.

Like the cards that make me smile
And wandering thoughts that stir
Alone on a snow-embraced trail
And watching the birds fly by
Like the love that follows your every stride
Gliding forward on bluebirds' wings.
A clone of my dad, you say
And everyone agrees, including me.

You've persevered through many things
Just like the seasons through years
And carry on with faith and love.

I've learned from you
To enjoy the value of the outdoors
The peace, the little lives unfolding
Just beyond our human touch.

To watch the birds laugh and argue,
To feel the peace in the steps of wind
To solve a puzzle in the sunlight.
To just exist and watch and listen.
So, I listened.

And what called to me was gratefulness.
So, I wanted to say thank you.



Petri Dish Paradox

your life is perfect, until you zoom out.

you cannot grow in uncontrolled, fake environments.

so, you transform yourself.

it's just a little façade;

how bad can it be?

let's be realistic, this is going to be your spiral.

a new outfit here, maybe a haircut there. you curate your feed entirely to your demise.

you know this behavior by now, you're old and grown.

you know right from wrong.

so, please stop.

the ideal:

finding where you want to go in life,

posting any good thing that happens in

hopes for a reward.

this is untrue,

you find out very

fast.

turning to music as a form of sanity, although this only increases the inhalation and promotes your hallucinations.

renting yourself out like property.

gaining followers.

let's be realistic, this is a mask.

so, please stop.

the treatment:

you need to feed the butterflies in your stomach;

they've been deprived for

too long.

you need to understand that you are the only thing that is there

for you.

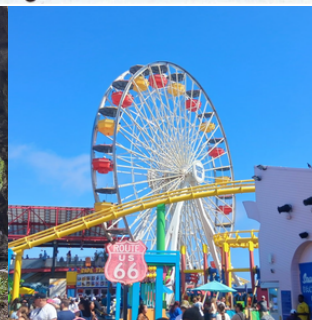
let's be realistic, emotions are human nature.

so, feel them.





Signs symbolized the students' concern for principles of human rights.





EDITOR’S NOTE

I sincerely hope this creative work has struck something with you. To read the work of peers, students, faculty, and staff is a special opportunity that The Laurel has been working to preserve for the past 127 years. In this edition, I have chosen to feature multiple works from past editions. I believe that in order to keep the tradition of this publication alive, we have to acknowledge the amazing work of our predecessors and the creative work that has been a part of St. Bonaventure’s past.

It has been an honor to lead this publication through the 2025-2026 academic year, and I could never have done it alone—a big thank you to each and every editor who has made my life exponentially easier. You should be proud of your contribution to this edition.

A special thank you to Dr. Joe Hall for your guidance, to Rachael Schultz and Dennis Frank for allowing me to dig through each past edition, to my peers for each ounce of inspiration they shared, and to each person who made the leap to submit their work.

Please help keep the tradition alive by submitting your work to laurel@sbu.edu.

Thank you,
Abigail Taber ‘27

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