

2023

The Laurel

Est. 1899



Cover Art: “God’s Masterpiece”

By Caitlyn Slater

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Foreword

There are times in life when we find ourselves within cycles, seemingly without beginnings. Sometimes we wonder why every day starts with a cup of coffee, why we greet each person on the street in a certain way. Why do we drop a ball on New Year's Day? Does our grand tradition still hold the same significance as it did at the outset? The Laurel has been around since 1899, offering print editions every year since (with PDF versions much more recently), and I've felt the weight of this legacy several times throughout the year. This wonderful institution has been as much an outlet for creative freedom as it has been a historical record. My fear of disappointing the past sometimes mixed with that question of relevance today.

But there is a perennial hunger at St. Bonaventure University, to create and experience writing. There is a desire to build something never built before on the page. It's sometimes brilliant, and always unpredictable. Reviewing the poetry submitted for this year's edition, I am reminded of why I was drawn to The Laurel in the first place: the ability to look into a writer's eyes and see just one piece of them is undefeatable. I know how special this thing can be. And I am adamant that next year's editors are worthy of the legacy I had come to fear.

I'd additionally like to thank Dr. Joe Hall for his help throughout the year. Despite everything going on in work and life, Dr. Hall never failed to check in, give advice, or reach out to interested students. I hope he offers the same support to next year's staff, who will appreciate it as much as I have.

Please, enjoy this year's edition of The Laurel. I know I will for years to come.

-Tucker Reilly (Editor-In-Chief)

Images of Us

Two entities intertwined
In body, mind, and spirit
Soulmates, one might say
But the word echoes like a bad cliché
They are so much more than that,
Blank canvases waiting for each other to paint on.

Tentatively in love, let's call it
With past traumas ruining bright futures
Or so she thought
Images of Us, shining bright
What friendships can turn into if they are
nurtured
And given time.

Manifestation in its truest form,
A shot in the dark that was right on target
Images of Us burn brighter
As the love grows
stronger.

Accidentally in love
But in the best way.
Images of Us flash
and the future seems bright
again.

When you ask for *Images of Us*,
Love without conditions
And light with impossible brightness.

-Meghan Baehl

The Conversation:

“BLACK LIVES MATTER!”

That’s what we yell while we get shot with rubber bullets.

As if we are their practice targets at the shooting range.

Like we aren’t even people, getting tear gassed like we are in war,

But we are in war,

The war to **save our lives**.

Have they forgotten that we have rights?

The First Amendment states “abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the

people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

We have done nothing wrong...

But in the eyes of a White man, we have.

To them we have no rights, and our lives do not matter.

That’s why we need to say their names,

George Floyd

Tamir Rice

Aiyana Jones

Akai Gurley

Lauren Smith-Fields

I spend every day looking in the mirror thanking God that I am still here.

That I am thankful for my brothers and sisters who have fought for me

And so many more that have fallen due to the color of our skin.

-Jenna Langley

Love-Hate

Can a person love and hate at the same time?
Is there a word to describe this ocean of emotion?

This boiling whirlpool of emotion prancing inside of me
When you said you found the cure.

You said you found the cure,
The cure to set us free.

Now we can be free!
And yet, it's too late

Now it's far too late.
The Queen of Mercury is dead.

The Queen is dead, her subjects massacred.
And who is to blame?

Are we the ones to blame?
Can a person hope and despair at the same time?

-Robin Lane

I try and I try

I try my best every day
Sometimes it's exhausting
The only one advocating
for my child

I need help
but I can't ask...
Barely anyone understands

Resources?
Yeah, try again
Support?
Non-existent

Stress radiates from me
Common cold?
I think you mean
Bronchitis and hospitalization

I need a break
but I can't trust
anyone
to take care of my child

Sometimes I think am I good enough?

I'm so drained

Work, parent duties, sleep

repeat.

I am the revolution

The world needs to watch out

God will back me

Will you too?

-Caitlyn Slater

The Conscience of the King

In the wake of a massacre

A human is not such a perfect machine

Now, before we begin our story

Your country

The Talk of the Town

At a volcanic eruption, the sublime experience of watching land submerge
land.

Sometimes the legacy of the empire is too much to hold. Did you know?

Do you want to take it?

The stories of public figures have a way of ending tragically.

Bronze Gold.

-Charlie Doebert

Verdant Steel

Before the sun kisses the morning sky, You are there
When the day steadily grows tired into night, You are there
With each bend of the pavement, You are there
guiding me along the arduous obstacle-ridden path

You stood there valiantly on the dawn of my father's proudest moment
You remained unhinged in your thirty-mile endeavor even during the hottest summer
unforgiving in nature, carrying the burden of expanse

You never once complained no matter how far the journey
You never once hesitated to assist me on the trek of daily transit
never asking once to join me in my matriculations

You could go days, weeks, or months without seeing me
enduring the unrelenting advances of the most unfavorable elements
You could go farther with me than any one person I've known
reminding me of my flaws without uttering a word

built with the vigor of the most loyal steed
You embolden me with confidence and perseverance
I admire Your inexorable lust for adventure
You're undaunted by danger

You are an abominable opponent in the face of the world's imperfections
emblazoned with the orange stain of sacrifice

You're precious, You're verdant steel

-Conan Lynch

The Other Side:

If I wasn't White.

What a different world it is.

Being judged for everything I do,
Just because of the pigmentation of my skin.
Trying to make friends,
Getting a good education,
Applying for a job.

Every day is "judgement day".

But I am not ashamed of who I am.
There are so many others just like me.

And so, I celebrate for my people
For they have given me hope in this cruel world.
I am beautiful,
I am powerful,
I am brave.

I fight, because others have for me,
50 years ago...

Times were different,
They're "better" now but we still must fight.

One day we will all live in peace and harmony.
I pray for a loving world.
But first we must fight.

The simple things that you take for granted when you have the privilege
Of having White skin.

-Jenna Langley

Ode to a Bed

On the day you were born,
I held you close.
With my arms wrapped around you,
I kept you safe,
As you set on your journey
To the land of make-believe.
When you were sick,
I offered you sanctuary.
When you were sad,
I held you, and listened to your sorrows
As you cried into my shoulder.
On your wedding night,
I will be your oasis.
And when your children arrive,
I will welcome them the way I welcomed you.
And as you breathe your final breath,
I will tuck you in for one last embrace.
I was there in the beginning,
I will be here in the end.

-Robin Lane

The 'R'-Word

It makes my blood boil
The word that makes me yank my hair
The word that frustrates me the most
Derogatory term yet
MOST don't care
It makes me want to shriek,
you'd think I was scurrying through a haunted house
The urge to slap someone
Stronger than the urge to scream.
Tears threaten to flow down my cheeks
The heart-ache for those it hurts
My heart yearns for the word to vanish
We need to do more.
They deserve more!
Offensive to me since
Oogie is my world

-Caitlyn Slater

Pieces

It's been years.
Do you still think about me?
I still think about you.
I wish I didn't.

you're the devil on my shoulder
the dark shadow that lives in the closet of my persona
the voice in my head causing me to second guess every decision

you planted a seed of doubt long ago in another life
that blossomed into a beautiful garden of vacillation
each flower blooming with an insecurity you gave me

Sometimes I miss the blissful joy of it all

I was an ambitious artist
And you were my canvas

I was an infatuated film student
And you were my favorite movie

I was an inspired musician
And you were my favorite song

I was a voracious reader
And you were the book I couldn't put down
Until I reached the last page and realized

There was no resolution

I remember when I gave you my heart
I thought it would be safe

But you filled it with shame, guilt, and sorrow
I remember the last time we ever spoke

“I love you...” you whispered so delicately
It was too effortless for you to lie
I could hear your soundless sobs through the phone
my silence still haunts me
but what haunts me more

Is the incessant, inalterable sting of your memory
You left me torn apart. Fractured. In pieces.

-Conan Lynch

Song for Enrique

Kiké sits on a box of tortillas, shaving the scales off tilapia.
Kiké walks through freezer doors, carrying tubs of fry batter.

Kiké sits in the old bathtub, soaking his aching joints,
Drinking beer and wondering if there is more to ask for.
Each room smells like soap.

The skin on his hands is brittle and torn
From bleach and grease and knives.
He asks if he should want more.

There's a harsh pain
In his lower back.
He asks if he has earned more.

He asks if he is unhappy.
Probably not.
And so he unravels again.

In the long night, Kiké sleeps within
himself – not knowing what is
or was or could have been.
His love beside him –
endless hands and
days. Where is
Heaven? In
nameless
purpose.

-Tucker Reilly

Letter to my Hand

It's hard to remember what it was like before you were broken. A time before the pain. The sadness that grew into rage. It physically hurts me to drag my pen along this page. Writing is painful, and it's your fault. It's hard not to harbor resentment for you. I know the sun will still rise tomorrow, but with each new day comes more persistent pain. I never thought something so small could have such a big impact. You've instilled a fear in me; one that will live with me for a long time. Your grotesque form doesn't help either. You're up there with some of my biggest insecurities. Through it all though, your infliction of pain turned out to be my greatest teacher. It taught me appreciation. You taught me that every victory mattered, no matter how small. You gave me the wisdom to appreciate waking up in the morning. You've slowly shown me the silver linings. The author of my pain became one of my closest friends. A great mind of the sport recognized that courage was born out of my severity. My parents—all four of them—were my champions through the worst of it. They still are, and I'm thankful to have them in my corner. I used to think you made me weak, but after 1,138 days it's clear that you're my greatest source of strength.

With love,
my afflicted soul

Conan Lynch

In soft rays of sunlight

The sky smothers us, leaving our heads full of edges.

And for a moment, everything stills

And the world is without sound.

-Laurel Staff

