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# Mountain Laurels

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**Acknowledgements**
In Dedication. . .

This edition of *Mountain Laurels* is loving dedicated to Dr. Sally B. Allen, whose contributions to the students of North Georgia College are priceless. Managing to be an educator, friend, and confidant to any and all who have crossed her path, student or faculty, Dr. Allen is a model for all to emulate. For all you are and all you have done, Dr. Allen, we thank you!

*And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.*

*Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, "Prologue"*
OF OBLIGATIONS, DECORATIONS AND VISITS

On a backwoods windy hillside
While Jesus looked over my shoulder
I brought you an offering

It's been a year
Since last I sat before you
Clearing your arrangements
Swatting ants off my feet
And trying to recall
If I ever knew
What your favorite color was

The crab grass had grown back
It had a real foot hold
No matter how often I clear it
It always comes back
Even thicker

I couldn't stay long
Now I know
You couldn't either
As I left
An ant bit my foot
I remember the sting
But it passed quickly

It wasn't bad at all, Mom
What Jesus saw that day

Georgann Lanich
"Poems I've written to you -  
Smearèd blue ink lingers on my hands,  
Fleeting thought I leapt at, pounced on,  
Rather than find them later lost.  
I think of you, from time to time,  
And consult the lined oracle of my palm;  
'Remember me, remember me, adieu - !'  
Ocean-breast breathing incessantly at our side,  
Four long lines of holes vacant behind us:  
A tear on your cheek and a tear in my heart.  
'Think but this and all is mended -'
But we never tasted that slumber, did we?  
Half-moon pinch marks line my arms tip to top,  
Yet the root-word-for -sleep god hasn't stirred.  
I - now linger -  
Man on a shore like ink on a palm,  
Becoming hazy, indistinct, unclear, absorbed.  
I smile. Whose palm might I poison?  
Two lines of holes behind me now are heel-dug;  
The earlier four are missing, and I wait -  
I dare not blink and I dare not breathe:  
A blink flashes you before me, hair back, eyes bright;  
A breath mingles your scent with salt and shore. . .  
Soon, though, my eyes dry and lungs ache; I -  
Curse my human frailty, and blink, and breathe.  
'And these our spirits - are melted into air - !'  
But you don't. Defying foretelling, you stay!  
The lilt of your voice, the tilt of your brow,  
These things are chiseled into my granite head.  
'There is witchcraft in your eyes -'
And your voice, pronouncing Shakespeare,  
Or your voice, announcing our fate.
A tickling sound begins, out beyond the rocks,
Like rice sliding across a pan: rain.
I see it as a baptism, this 'proaching water,
The River Lethe evaporated and born again here.
In sheets it marches across me, cleansing,
And I melting run in blue rivulets to the sea.

John Alderman

LAST LOST LOVE

I smell you on the change of the seasons
And hear you in the songs we knew;
I taste your kiss in the early morning hours,
But the dreams and memories won't do.

Now, others I've taken and others I've tried,
But all fall short in your light,
So with you I rise and fall and love
By myself in my dreams in the night.

The reality of your curse blooms full;
No other can soften my fall.
I'd rather not have loved and lost,
For I can no longer love at all.

R. S. T.
THE SYSTEM ACCORDING TO MR. BUBBA JOHNSON

Sit down here a minute
Lets us have a talk
(she's the cutest thing!)
I know you're all upset,
and I thought
I'd take this opportunity
to clear up a point
or two.

Now,
College got you full of ideas,
All that book learnin'.
(She don't need no books
for making babies and dinner.)
And we like all that, just fine.
Don't get me wrong.

But, the boys,
they've worked here a long time.
You need to remember that and
Keep your sense of humor.
(and proper place.)

A little joke don't mean nothin'
Haven't you ever been told
that's just how men are.
(How does she expect
to ever find a husband
to take care of her
if she don't know that?)
Why, it don't mean nothin'.
That's how it is.
You'll have to learn
not to get mad.
If you wasn't pretty
or sexy
or blonde
you wouldn't be causing
so much trouble.

You are new and
I know
that you didn't
mean to stir up problems.
Go on back to your desk,
file some invoices,
type a memo,
put some coffee on,
and you'll do fine.

Georgann Lanich  

POET ≠ SPEAKER

i feel i think what i
know what he thinks he feels i
see he acts like he thinks i
feel like i can't act like i
want but i know what i
feel what i think about him.

John Alderman  

9.
TIES NEVER BINDING

As hawks freed from their jesses soar
past reach into the skies,
So in me grows a desperate urge
beyond your grasp to rise.
And like a horse that leaps its fence,
a dog that breaks its leash,
I'll strain with all the will in me
to seek that bless'd release.
These bonds you've laid upon me are
in sense, such worthless ties
For when they break, there's nothing more
to hold me but your eyes.
And with those helpless eyes you'll watch
me take to heart and flee
Because you did not love enough
yourself, to set me free.

\[ \textbf{Evelyn D. King} \]
EDICIUS

To my love untrue, so the price I now pay,
Every night as I sleep and through the hours of day,
Her love and trust shattered all my only regrets,
And so great is my grief that life I must quit.
Though I haven't the heart to call forth suicide,
There's a way I can watch as my life slips by.

So take down the sky and push back the sea;
Sweep up the sands and hide them from me.
Roll up the rivers and fold up the grass;
Erase the word "future" and let time simply pass.
Place the broken world at my feet in a pile;
I'll use my heart's last spark to set it afire.

Let the wind come next and blow the ashes astray;
Then round up the wind and send it away.
Let it rain one last time and wash color to black;
Rewrap touch, taste and feel and send all three back.
For now I've committed revised suicide;
My whole world is dead and I'm still alive.

R. S. T. ☐
And here I am
A stranger in my homeland.
I do not understand peace,
All I ever have known is war.
I do not understand rest,
I have wandered all my days.
My son here is a stranger
Grown into an alien man.
My wife ne'er talks
To this stranger once wed.
I lay in bed at night,
Tired from our loving -
Or tired from the motion -
I hold her and I try
To forget her loyalty,
To forget my betrayal.
Poseidon's last vengeance
Is a bloody conscience.
I know I will leave
Looking for answers
I have no hope to find.
I will die forgotten -
An old hero
Whose time once came
And now is gone,
An old man
Who outlived his
Usefulness.
And they will curse me
When I go.
TIME FLOW

As rivers run and mountains melt
and seas erode away,
so flees my hope, my every thought
before I've had my say.
And then at times the sun won't move,
the stars remain in place,
so comes my fear, my loss, my hurt
to hold a slower pace.
It makes me think of lives and time,
and how they must relate,
for time becomes by hopes and dreads
the beating heart of fate.

Evelyn D. King

HE HAD LOOKED . . .

He had looked out over these faces for 25 years. All were assembled
as usual, minus one.
Recounting fishing trips and the time he had been given a bible, he
noticed how the words seemed diluted compared to the rich memories.
Passion gave way to fatigue as he sat down. This deepening weariness
of the spirit came more often these days. He was so tired of saying
goodbye.
Old Glory blanketed his friend's last rest and he covered his eyes
from the sight. He felt so alone, the last one left. While he wept,
"Amazing Grace" filled the air.

Georgann Lanich
BENEATH THE CHARACTER'S EMOTIONS

Beneath the character's emotions,
(And sometimes even fueling them)
Is this actor's.
A rage at a stitched-together monster
Is rage at foolishness, at baseness unchecked.
A joy in a love only haply found
Is joy in a spring wind gently blowing.
A weeping, bleary sadness at death unannounced
Is weeping, bleary sadness at death unannounced.

Mourning on stage makes midnight offstage.
Memory's dusty-bony fingers curl about my throat;
Its stiff collarbone presses my back roughly,
Like a tree limb in its strong sparseness.

Do you know what it is like?
The harsh biting of a mouth unlipt!
No soothing flesh oozing over the wound, no flesh -
Only cold, unfeeling bone without nerves or blood.

Toby would he have liked best:
Jacques unapproachable, Victor somewhat odd.
"Leonard was cool," he'd say, "he spoke English."
Joseph posed; Leonard kissed; Beast roared.
Jonathan might second Toby with his 'stick;
Charles? well . . .

Now Antony, last perhaps of all,
Dying, Egypt, dying. Dost hear, brother?
If from this earth I see thy face once more,
I'll do't in thanks. I and my grief
Have earned our chronicle.
The wind blows. Dust stirs. Theatres empty.
Deaf then?

*John Alderman*

**POOR BARREN STERILE**

Poor barren sterile
moon
gazing down at your
blue-white sister
whose womb
teems with the
ooze of life - womb
fecund and wet
with life.
What chance gave
her the bearing grace
while barren the
moon looks on?

*Tommie Scanlin*
SANCHO PANZA

"So tell me friend,
Whom so well I have known,
Whom so long I have squired,
Friend I have loved,
Friend I have admired -
Did you lose your mind,
Lost in unreality
Or did you notice your loss
And your defeat?
The only kingdom you rule now is one of moss,
As in the earth you lay
Face up-turned to the stars."

"I saw you friend
When, with no one else in sight,
You cried into your hands
As the world wronged what was right.
You loved unrequited
And jostled upon a tired mare.
You lost wars with windmills
And fought goblins of air
And for what?
You never won a single war
And now glory and honor
Will be yours never more."

"I watched you friend
As every battle in defeat
You left quiet and sad,
Off for a new battle to meet,
Knowing you would lose again,
But fighting on in endless vain.
I thought once you were a fool
But in your eyes I saw the pain,
And that hurt I knew
Was recognition that your quest would fail,
And that hurt I knew
Caused you to grow weak and pale."

"I heard you friend
As you lay dying in your bed.
You offered me a peaceful smile
But I, child-like, wept instead.
'Do not,' you said "mourn for me
For my losses I did not feel.
I fought and lost for what was right
And never for what was real.
I loved unrequited
Because love to love did I,
And though unloved in this life
This lonely life I now die.
Do not let me have lived in vain -
For life unrequited is sorrow.
Remember my attempts, my friend,
And that will be my bright tomorrow.
I lost my battles,
But no one wins all the war.
Do not remember that I lost -
Remember I fought till I could fight no more.
Do not remember that I failed,
But that I tried until my heart burst.
Do not remember that I was unloved -
Remember that I always fought to love first!"

"I cried for you friend,
But you shook your head and replied:
'My life was worth my loss!
My love worth the tears I cried!
I lost, but so what!
I cared, I loved, I laughed, I danced too!
I helped them, my friend -"
And that is all I sought to do!
I have told you of my pain
To gain of your pity naught,
But so that it may teach you
And you will learn what I have been taught.
So stop your weeping, your pity!
Do not be caged in such mournful chains!
Life will pass you by
If you spend your time crying o'er pains!"

"So tell me friend,
Whom so sorrowful I buried,
What is it that you behold
When upon me you look
From the heights of your earthly stronghold?
I have listened to your advice,
But, my friend, it is hard -and sometimes I fail -
To smile in the face of defeat
As slowly all my quests seem to lead
Me to failure and failure to repeat;
But I remember what you have taught, my friend -
And I do not lose hope."

☐  A. W. Rathbone II

RETROSPECT

no image comes freely,
my memory is forced,
perhaps in seeking
a moment of warmth,
I construct my past.

☐  Evelyn D. King
I ENTER THE HOUSE
WITH NO SMALL FEAR
DREAD, REMORSE,
A BOTTLE OF BEER

MY WIFE YELLS,
THE CHILDREN DRONE,
SHE'S IN TEARS,
"HELL," I MOAN.
THE NOISE! THE DIN!
THE GLASS OF GIN

I HEAR WAVES CRASHING AND GNASHING ON THE COASTAL DOOR
BUT NO ONE, WHY WON'T ANYONE, PLEASE LET THEM IN?

WAVES CRASHING, LIKE BROKEN DREAMS ON THE FLOOR
BRINGING BACK NIGHTMARES OF WHERE I HAVE BEEN

WAVES, STRONG AND WET, SPLASHING ON THE ROCKS
LIKE MY WHISKY, WICKED, AT SIX O'CLOCK

WAVES, RECEDING, ECHOING IN MY HEAD
THEN POUNDING AND THUDDING UNTIL I AM DEAD

FOR HOURS THEY SPLASH AND SLOSH AND SPEW FROTH AND SPRAY
AS I, IN MY CHAIR, FADE SILENTLY AWAY.

M. HARRIS
These mornings are nice -
My window faces east and south a bit:
The wint'ring sun creeps steadily to the right,
But not gone yet, still in bed I see
The silver clouds' grey linings
As the sun strides over the southward mountain.
The stratification is like my hands,
One above the other with a space in between:
Moving then, low to high, as if flying,
I see the palm of my hand dusted with light,
Then the darkness between,
Then the full glory of once again openness.
When first I flew, my feet gently feeling nothing,
I discovered this wonderful trick of flight,
That always above the clouds, is openness.
I'd fly this morning, but I'm a bit sleepy:
The perfect morning for tea, or you.

□ John Alderman
THE GRAVE DIGGER

When you treat a woman like a corpse,
Nailing the lid on her coffin
with your abusive tool,
Do you lament her silence?
As your roving hands meet
her stony flesh,
Do you notice that
the bottled blush
has sunk into her features
leaving a skeleton
covered with iced-blue
filigreed flesh,
And the death mask
of her lips and cheeks
you painted so readily,
Granite eyes,
the marbles of the soul,
you petrified so easily,
Do you whisper as
you thrust
or
shout sooty streaks of poetry
from your ash blown mind?
Do you come
and leave her
carelessly,
in the grave
that you dug so hastily?

Sheri L. Toomey  □
CHOICES

In younger days I faced a choice,
Two doors, which one to take.
So sure that life was just beyond;
It was quite a choice to make.
So there I sat, eyes closed tight,
And pictured past each door.
Options weighed and choices made,
Vowing think of it no more,
So up I stepped and through I stepped,
The slam echoed through the halls.
Life is so very elusive, thought I,
Just more doors and the same gray walls.
Again I sat, and again I thought,
And again my choice was made.
So sure of exciting life beyond,
A door was pushed and swayed.
Once more the slam and echo long;
Once more my heart low dropped.
Where was Life and where was I?
Behind another door that stopped?
By and by the doors have come,
And by and by they've passed.
It's taken all my heart and soul,
But life I've found at last.
You can't touch life, and you can't see life
By opening doors to ways you'll take.
You see life is lived and life is loved
Through the choices that you make.
WE SIT IN A WELL-TENDED GARDEN

We sit in a well-tended garden,
Your half of this our dreaming
(Mine, the books).
It seems we should speak,
Yet unwarmed by words, the air 'tween us gapes:
Like a fish-mouth it opens-closes sans sound.
Obliquely your terrain-feature eyes reflect
The flowing script of your writing hand:
You inscribe on a brick a word, one word -
And thus the wall begins.
A sleight of voice, an acquiescence of shrug,
Are layer and mortar to our partition:
Soon, gesture by gesture, it eclipses you.
From some unseen quarter lifts the unseen wind,
Bending back the upper-right wall-corner.
As I watch, the malleable wall twists
The thickening wind forcing inch by inch
Into the bricks a cyclone with you atop.
You are flung higher and higher, out of my reach,
Until the wind slows, and bricks re-form.

***

Now is the twister a tower
And you the trapped damsel within.
Rapunzel? Rapunzel! Let down your hair,
These the golden threads of niceties
You sometimes allow us.
Do the tugs cause your cries?
I have painted the roses red.
And these, the rosèd thorns rosed with blood,
These barbs which have pierced my eyes,
Are not these the same tresses which once,
In a moment's hope, I laid at your feet?

John Alderman
THE JOKE

The winter morning snaps audibly.
   Can't you hear it? It echoes . . .
This is your concept of nature:
   Something without thought or care,
   So cold and white, so lifeless.
   It has no feel, no senses,
Yet in its own way, it overflows
   With awe-inspiring beauty.

I've heard you degrade her humor.
   Can't you hear it? It echoes . . .
Her laughter cracks like that snap
   On a cold, dismal, winter morn
   With everything cold and quiet.
   And everywhere life still thrives;
That clear-headed jackal is laughing
   Over a blood-stained rock.

  □ Evelyn D. King
SHOES I CAN IGNORE

Shoes I can ignore -
Feet, padding softly across a grassy field
Unnatural in the brevity of its leaves,
Natural in rolling breadth from sky to sky.
Warm in my soft clothes I feel ~different~
The cool breath of wind in my face,
The warm glance of sun on my hair,
The gentle hug of you in my soul.
Our softly clasped hands loosen and part,
Now swinging free as easily as they joined.
Do I breathe? Do my legs move?
My slightly dampened palm now glows in the wind,
Reminding me the canal of my love line is full - - -
As is my heart, with contentedness.

I can feel you glance at me - - -
Three skies, two with darker suns, then face me,
And spirits fly through each.
Tendrils of your hair are caught by the wind
And gyre 'round you like fireflies, cageless,
Swirling on a sweltering summer's eve.
Never has my breathing been so regular, so full - - -
I fill my lungs and breast with thoughts of this us
Not newly founded or rediscovered or uncovered,
But marvelous in its constancy of presence.

John Alderman □
FORGOTTEN, YET REMEMBERED

Like in a dream
I turned a page
in a chronicle of time,
a masterpiece not sequenced
day
by day,
but by memories of special moments,
and I lost my place.
Like a blindspot in a vista -
a missing face in the crowd -
it was there,
but I lacked it.
Though I sought in desperation
there was a gap
I could not fill.
Like a wind riffling pages
randomly,
the storyline was blurred,
and images
drifted
out of sequence,
bombarding that empty hollow
'til I even doubted the episode.

□ Evelyn D. King
play with words, my friend. Let us speak

A BOWL OF STRIPED SOUP

Gadabout Griphon ate red cinnamon balls,
His mouth was always red and burning,
People used to stick cigarettes into his
flaming orifice to get a light,
They didn't know
G.G. loved fire but hated smoke,

Lily Linklamp danced the kantikoy
on Main Street in a beaded, blue sheath,
men in hats threw silver and clapped
a sharp, tight beat with cupped hands,
She never spent the money but sewed it on
her dress instead,

Garrison Glidder blew pink, soap bubbles
out of a tin kazoo, then he played every
old, town ballad he knew,
No one remembers the words,
they were too busy chasing
the bobbing bubbles,

Linda Liplash painted red polka dots
on her black, ballet shoes,
pranced and plied with a silver
basket of strawberries balanced on her head,
then aimed the sweet fruit at every
mouth framed in oh.

Sheri L. Toomey □
DO YOU HAVE RIVERS

Do you have rivers where you live?
It seems we'd have them all,
It is so wet here.
Rivers are hardly rivers, as rivers go,
When each is a sea to cross, a sea each,
Each sea meeting sea at shore.
Our lands are minimal (well hidden)
And the crops can't grow for the mud,
Not even rice; not even rice.
Our houses sink, and our lawns won't grow;
We've eaten fish so long we've scales,
And all of us always wonder:

When will it Rain?

It seems that water from elsewhere,
A new direction, a new feel,
This would be nice; this would be new.
So, I gently write this ginger message
To you, to you,
And place it in a cracked bottle-brown.
Perhaps it will reach you, mayhaps not;
I'll just place it in the river here,
Place it in the river,
let it go,
let it go.
In the circular motion of this world
It will probably be right back.

□ John Alderman
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT

There's something about
light through the leaves
revealing tender veins.
Light and shadow are
around us
shifting infinitely,
never staying.
A movement,
a rhythm
set by cosmic
tugs -
    relentlessly
    endlessly
    comfortably;
World without
End.

Tommie Scanlin
I am going to begin class today by giving you an outline of what we will be covering over the next week. It might as well be a week. Almost two days late.

World War II involves a great deal of detail as far as dates, names, and locations are concerned. There is a lot of information, but don't let it worry you. Yeah, that's it. Being all wrapped up and worried about it is making me late.

We are going to be moving very fast and covering a lot of ground. So I strongly suggest that you control your urge to skip until we are through this section. I can't believe that he skipped. I'm here! Maybe he figures that part of him is present.

Don't forget to leave space for adding information as we go. I want you to go ahead and put the test down for Wednesday. A test. I have to go into a drug store and buy a test. The dates are especially important in regards to these places: Poland, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands,
Belgium, Normandy, Pearl Harbor, surrender in Italy, and The Battle of the Bulge, and France. If we were as cool about everything like the French Are I could've just taken one of those pills and everything would be fine.

People you need to know are: Bradley, Eisenhower, Hitler, MacArthur, Montgomery, Mussolini, Patton, Roosevelt, Stalin... Hello! Do you think you could come back now? and Churchill. I can't know. Don't dry. Can I come back? to church? Can God forgive me and help me?

Vocabulary: Overlord, D-Day, u-boat, Axis, fascists, holocaust, Cold War, and foxhole conversion.

Dear heavenly Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Please let this... cup be taken from me. I can't even say the word. I'll never do it again. I promise. In Jesus' nave Amen. It isn't any good if it doesn't have an Amen. Cross myself for good measure.

Tomorrow we will begin at the top of our list and discuss our way down. So come in, get settled, and be ready to start at the bell. Oh, my God. Please let it. Oh, Yes! I've got to get to a rest room. And the pill. I've got to get on the pill.
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