

## **Aubade, 1862**

For Thomas Jonathan Jackson

The still-dark mountains  
Drawn up in ranks  
For stand-to at the dawn:  
These roughshod soldiers at reveille  
Just visible after night's long  
Dark camouflage.  
The light now in those marches,  
Along their peaks,  
Moving as implacable  
As a downhill attack  
On a sleeping garrison.  
There is no defense, sir,  
Against such beauty  
Here, in the Shenandoah.

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## **For Julie Who Is One**

We hear of little people in the woods  
On this and every Patrick's Day I know,  
For they reside in rural neighborhoods  
In Ireland where the peat and shamrocks grow.

We only learn of Dermot, Sean and Seamus  
But never hear of little *colleen bans*--  
Only men with pots of gold are famous;  
But where, Sir, are the lady leprechauns?

They tired themselves of the wind and overcast  
And the wearing of gossamer gowns long out of style.  
(Sure, the leprechauns in Ireland are decreasing fast—  
Their women have come Westward to beguile.)

And how do I know this; How am I led  
To say what I'm saying and what I've said? Ah,  
At the risk of sounding country-bred:  
"There's a Lady Leprechaun...in my bed."

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## **Something Else**

Just when  
I began to understand  
The rules, moves,  
Boundaries, odds:  
Where to play,  
What others could  
Or couldn't do;  
Some tactics,  
A little strategy, too;  
And at last, the score—  
Someone said  
It was time to leave the field.  
Maybe it wasn't  
Fair or right,  
Just absolute.

Still wasn't it grand,  
Grand, just to be  
In the game for a while?

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## **Above the Mekong, 1966**

She thought I'd been a casual friend.  
She never know until I stopped by that I'd  
Been with him those last brutal minutes:  
The ones that fiction never really tells.  
What he'd said; how he'd died by accident;  
A burst from his own door gunner,  
In his back and spine,  
After the 12.5 groundfire and a hard, evasive jink  
To avoid the thick green tracers.  
How he'd rasped above the urgent engine's whine  
About the kids and her, while there on the  
Running, corrugated floor of the slick  
As it redlined, fatally, into Ton Son Nhut.  
I didn't say anything of this to her,  
Except that he'd said he loved her, and that he  
Always would. That these were his last words.  
That he'd had a painless passing.

I'd like to think that sometime when I'm hit  
Most likely now by age, traffic, disease, or  
Improbably, some jealous soul,  
Someone would care to tell those of mine that remain,  
The good and important lies they ought to hear.

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## Definition

It takes so very little to  
Please her: Early papers from downstairs;  
Quiet music at breakfast;  
An early morning glance.  
Flowers, unrelated to  
Any special day.  
Honest comments on her hair  
Dress, or ornaments, that  
With her faint perfume,  
Evoke exactly what she wants  
To evoke.  
Love's simply what it ought to be:  
An everyday and evening wonder  
Of what we both can be.

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## The Rangers at Omaha Beach

These often six-foot waves  
Stormed ashore, surging over  
That Midwestern-named, but still  
European beach.  
Below the *Pointe du Hoc* they  
Drove upward into two days  
Of advance and loss: 50 of their 250  
Fought into the heights. Those remaining  
Passed on eastwards, into unit history,  
Leaving behind the first blood sacrifices  
That all great mortal undertakings in war  
Then and now, seem to ask.

Some may since dare to forget  
With our passing time's quiet years  
The necessary violence that  
So few consider or allow, but  
Without which success in war  
Most often demands.

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