

An Emily Dickinson Ending

by John Cantey Knight

It has been that many years and again
since last my fingers pulled huckleberries
from the bush to fill a pail. As the mountain
opens onto weathered rock, the trail
maneuvers through a thicket of laurel.
A vista of valleys and coves bake in July.
This is the kind of place to find berries
and snakes. Along the fringe the bushes
clump knee-high, full of fruit. Methodically
I stomp my boots and poke with a stick
a striking length back into the beginnings
of shade. A rattler, if there, would sing.
It's the copperheads that perplex me. I sit,
the pail below the pulling fingers. Already
feeling the sweat trickle down my back,
I look for the next bush. Stained fingertips
move in hesitating rhythms. As an hour
of picking is calculated into muffin tins,
a garter snake disturbed my quiet.