

# Laddy

by Teresa M. Conner

It's been fifteen long years- since my little brother and I  
chose you from the litter.

Full of the energy of new life,  
those furry paws, always in motion,  
and still wet with the fresh dew of dawn,  
left puppy tracks across my mother's tile floor.

You'd always follow my brother and me  
across the tobacco field to the creek,  
lagging behind, your tail fanning your rear  
like some subservient beast,  
while we hit rocks with sticks.

Then you'd jump in the clear creek water.

Your brown tongue lapped the rapids.

We grew older and the creek became colder.

Adulthood distanced our relationship with you.

With your loyal muzzle whitening,  
you'd lumber on the porch,  
resting on a braided rug,  
eager to accept a kind word  
or a scratch behind the ear.

It's been a full canine lifetime.

The creek and tobacco field have been abandoned.

Dusk has surrendered to the night,  
but your cratered moon shines whole  
on my mother's faded tile floor.