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Wilderness Token

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JAMES HEARST

WILDERNESS TOKEN

Wild grapes tied their vines
 in a loose knot to the branches
 of haw trees strung with berries,
 spiced the air with broken clusters
 swelled by rains, plundered by bees.

Dry paths led the boy with a gun
 through tangled sumach to the creek's
 edge where a pool hugged the roots
 of leaning trees and handful of yellow
 leaves sprinkled the black water.

Indian still he stood, two wild ducks,
 a mallard drake and hen, filled his
 hunter's eyes, iridescent and shining
 they kissed the black water—the wilderness
 held its breath, the gun kept silent,
 the pair started a single ripple

and swam deep in a boy's October memory,
 honey clear air and gold leaved sky,
 until a cold November wind shrivelled
 the last grapes, and love fell with broken wings
 after a short flight through a man's heart.

ELIZABETH BARTLETT

ON A ROCK OF ATLANTIS

Five. Between each the ages
 that separate, yet unite
 the pillared span.

The oldest leads and guides
 as the short, crooked thumb
 of long experience.

The others follow. Up and down
 to the last small boy
 trailing behind.

Unevenly they stride
 through the gray, silent dawn
 towards the sea

Where the waves still breathe
 of sleep, and empty miles
 unwind the shoreline.

Five figures probe the wind,
 the tide. They pace their length
 along the sand