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## Wisconsin Gothic

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## Knoeller: Wisconsin Gothic

### WISCONSIN GOTHIC

Christian Knoeller

The couple inherits the oldest house in the valley  
perched above pasture abandoned  
to wild apple and black oak.

Come October, he returns from wetlands  
a paper sack streaked with duck's  
blood in one hand gun

in the other. She gathers wild grapes from  
a gully along the road to boil down  
with cinnamon, lemons, and clove

straining dark juice until morning. Night  
after night he rehearses with bow, target  
marked with a buck's heart and lungs.

She listens for reports of first frost, rescuing  
half-ripe tomatoes to the safety of her  
porch. He no longer notices

trophies beside the dining room table nor paired  
pheasants a taxidermist has captured forever  
in the gesture of escape. She picks

a spray of Indian tobacco to arrange  
in a tall vase just inside the door—  
her corner—the one wall devoid

of death: a resurrection of weeds and dried  
flowers. Year to year he remembers trails  
bucks strut in rut, she the feral trees

laden with sweetest fruit. Under a harvest  
moon they sit together, silent, as if  
the same walls contain them.