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Hunting Pheasants in Lehigh County

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Hunting Pheasants in Lehigh County

I am here as last year and the year before,
climbing the dirt road past wild grapes
toward the high fields, with the spaniel
moving back and forth in front of me
and cold wind down my collar.
The afternoon is gray and blue,
the stream silver as it enters the ravine.

I enter grass higher than my head
and stop to listen to it,
to the far-off cries of crows.
All afternoon it is woods and hedgerows,
red berries, thorns catching sleeve and hat.
The birds run ahead of us
and it is not frailty that stops me from circling
down to the overgrown orchard where they roost,
then hunting back into their confusion.
It is something else settling beneath brushpile
or furrow in this long afternoon
as I move among the names of autumn,
seedbox, pinweed, enchanter's nightshade,
all the intricate accidents of time drying.