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The Knoll

Brooks Briggs

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The Knoll

Brooks Briggs

On its brim two boys sit
like half-folded lawn chairs;
evening air strains their idle
banter and drains punctuation

to the valley below. I see
their blued-barrels teetering
on bent knees, angled to hurl
chasing metal at darting mammals

or rooted trash; I stop to watch. They feed
metal clips; kill some time; count the cans
along the gulch, then string them on lines
of bullet smoke: a tumbling Book

of Hours. Between the sage at last
a pulse: dash dash dash dot. Their metal
chambers finally wake, respond with booming
snaps. Quick legs dodge sneezing pockets

of sand, then stop abruptly. The ears
are spread, and curses spill with copper casings.
While magazines argue against desperate packing,
I watch the prey sit calm and wait: the valley

swallows. When at last the beads are drawn,
emptiness—the vacancy of a sandy tongue.