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## Blackberry Girls

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# Blackberry Girls

The blackberry thickets  
are swollen again.  
Gather together  
and gather our baskets.

We run towards the thickets.

The berries are small and wild.  
We gather them, drop them into baskets.  
Pop them into mouths.  
We chatter about summer things  
and laugh at the junebugs mounting  
each other on the leaves.

Our little baskets are soon full.  
We sit in the grass.  
We are silent for a moment.

Then we slowly get up  
and move towards the stone garden path.  
There, we rub berries between our fingers.  
On one of the stones, we each draw a line,  
forming a blackberry star.

We gather around the stone.

At the five tips of the berry-stain star,  
we set little offerings:

the head of a stray dandelion,  
a slice of a halved crab apple,  
the shred of a caterpillar-munched leaf,  
a piece of shell from a fallen egg,  
and the emerald wing of a dead Junebug.

This is girlhood in summer.

We begin to braid blades  
of grass together,  
watching the star, waiting.  
Braiding is never idle.  
Old magic.

The little woven bundles  
of grass are placed,  
one by one, into the center of the star.

The offerings to summer  
and girlhood swell  
with a sweetening power.

Running through us:  
Power magic blackberry hand holding twisting gathering.

Eat laughter, swallow its peals,  
and smile it back up to  
feed the afternoon like it's a baby bird.  
Anoint brows with blackberry mess.  
Tell stories, singing, dancing.

Blackberry girls are released  
to the earth in a torrent  
of solstice and thicket.  
They remember the ash and dust.

They remember the summer.