

Jacklighting

In this part of Pennsylvania, roads run along
streambeds, or beside the narrow tributaries
the highest ridges conceal when they turn
their faces to the north or south—creases

marked the length of their long necks, ravines
as beautiful as the shadowed space at the base
of a woman's throat. In these little-traveled
places, the men who have been without work

for weeks and weeks take their trucks out
into the dark to find deer, to capture them
in the gaze of their highbeams, so they might
kill, come back to their homes with more

than the defeated faces they wear as they pay
for milk and bread with food stamps, their few
real dollars laid down for a pack of Camels
they'll smoke as they gut the animal in the barn,

taking what they can, dumping the rest along
the river where winter snows bury the arcs
of the deer's slender white ribs.

After Andrew Wyeth's "Jacklight" (1980)

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