Deer Season

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DEER SEASON

November, late afternoon. I’m driving fast, only the parking lights on. A minor infringement of the law. . . .

All along Route 4 men wearing orange step out of the woods after a day of hunting, their rifles pointed toward the ground. The sky turns red, then purple in the west, and the luminous birches lean over the narrow macadam road.

I cross the little bridge near the pool called The Pork Barrel, where the best fishing is, and pass the Fentons’ farm—the windows of the milking parlor bright, the great silver cooling tank beginning to chill the milk.

I’ve seen the veal calves drink from pails in their stalls. Suppose even the ear of wheat suffers in the mill. . . . Driving fast in my car at dusk I plan our evening meal.

THE HERMIT

The meeting ran needlessly late, and while yawns were suppressed around the room the river swelled until it spilled. When the speaker finished, I made for the car and home as fast as fog would allow—until I came upon a barricade: beyond, black pools eddied over the road. Detour. The last familiar thing I saw—the steaming heaps of bark beside the lumber mill.