

MIKE CATALANO

## The Wreck

*Bettendorf, Iowa*

—for David Widup

It happened with such surgical precision  
before sunup on the Eisenhower Highway  
that no amount of precaution could separate  
car metal from deer bone at high speeds.  
And yes, there were flashback enactments  
of past wrecks and busted vows.  
But here, hundreds of miles from friends,  
I rolled over on glassy, metallic fragments  
as if they were transplanted shrapnel.

I knew my femur and fibula were fractured.  
Perhaps it was the potion of pain and snow  
that brought me back to grade school  
where bullies dunked me again and again  
into an icy vat. No amount of begging then  
or meditation now could undo that combustion  
of terror and anger. The buck, whose truncated  
torso was mere centimetres from mine,  
nodded, as if the guns and traps of his day  
made us blood brothers rather than enemy species.

Help came quickly enough for me.  
I couldn't say the same for Buck  
whose blood ran like rivulets over me.  
It took me a year to walk again.  
Maybe we really are no different,  
brute beasts at best. Or just maybe  
I finally forgave my tormentors  
forty years too late.