Buck

John Quinn
BUCK

His is a world of power that clouds the senses. He keeps a harem and a thicket if he can. If he is very young or slight he can’t long, and when he’s old he won’t. But in his prime, when he is heavy headed with the rut and all his caution is inflamed it seems at times he’d sooner fight than mount his does. The one here on the slope above Tom Cole’s camp has six does and four points on each antler. Another, last year, hung around the clearing at the fence near Minor Spring. He had five points and kept an even dozen does, but he was gaunt with greed and two young forked horns that worried him about the outskirts of his herd. He saw the future in those two, and he’d chase the one while the other sported with his wives. That old boy’s not around this year, and this one above Tom Cole’s camp is not so foolish, though he’s foolish not to run when he sees me. Instead he
stands his ground alert for me to make a sign. Fight or run. But I'm not here for deer this time, and when I whistle he turns toward me and drops his head, steps sideways behind some brush. His does, confused, begin to move downhill, slow, heads bobbing, alert but dumb. Whatever's up the old man's not his courtly self. And when he does appear again, head low behind a fallen log, all those horns seem nothing more than brush behind, before, above no four point mule deer buck but just another feeding doe.