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Buck

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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.