*Traveling through the Dark*

By William Stafford (1962)

Traveling through the dark I found a deer

dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.

It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:

that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car

and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;

she had stiffened already, almost cold.

I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—

her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,

alive, still, never to be born.

Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;

under the hood purred the steady engine.

I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;

around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—,

then pushed her over the edge into the river.

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Source: *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems* (Graywolf Press, 1998)