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Killed by Crossbow

Carter Staub

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In my living room,
an elk head hangs
on the white plaster wall,

curious,
 a head without its body.

The 800 pounds of it on the other side,
as if it had punched through
to the attic, nestled next to Christmas
lights and old picture frames.

He is arching his neck to the left.
 Or rather—his right.
And bugling.

—pretending to bugle.
The taxidermist thinking—

Yes. Just like that.

My father sent me the picture
holding the dead elk by the antlers.

There's still 500 pounds of it,
in little packages in our freezer downstairs,
 newly purchased to hold only elk—
my father's name on each one.