

# A Kind of Meadow

By Carl Phillips

—shored  
by trees at its far ending,  
as is the way in moral tales:

whether trees as trees actually,  
for their shadow and what  
inside of it

hides, threatens, calls to;  
or as ever-wavering conscience,  
cloaked now, and called Chorus;

or, between these, whatever  
falls upon the rippling and measurable,  
but none to measure it, thin

fabric of *this stands for*.  
A kind of meadow, and then  
trees—many, assembled, a wood

therefore. Through the wood  
the worn  
path, emblematic of Much

Trespass: *Halt. Who goes there?*  
A kind of meadow, where it ends  
begin trees, from whose twinning

of late light and the already underway  
darkness you were expecting perhaps  
the stag to step forward, to make

of its twelve-pointed antlers  
the branching foreground to a backdrop  
all branches;

or you wanted the usual  
bird to break cover at that angle  
at which wings catch entirely

what light's left,  
so that for once the bird isn't miracle  
at all, but the simplicity of patience

and a good hand assembling: first  
the thin bones, now in careful  
rows the feathers, like fretwork,

now the brush, for the laying-on  
of sheen.... *As is always the way,*  
you tell yourself, *in*

*poems*—Yes, always,  
until you have gone there,  
and gone there, “into the

field,” vowing *Only until*  
*there’s nothing more*  
*I want*—thinking it, wrongly,

a thing attainable, any real end  
to wanting, and that it is close, and that  
it is likely, how will you not

this time catch hold of it: flashing,  
flesh at once

lit and lightless, a way  
out, the one dappled way, back—

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Carl Phillips was born in Everett, Washington. He attended Harvard, where he received a B.A., the University of Massachusetts, where he earned an M.A.T., and Boston University, where he earned an M.A. Before teaching English at the university level, Phillips taught Latin at several high schools. He is a member of the faculty at Washington University in St. Louis and was elected a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 2006.