

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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