

KATHLEEN GALLIGAN

Allure, 2010
Oil on canvas, 12 x 12 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

TESS GALLAGHER

One Deer at Dusk

The hummingbirds are still
fumbling the feeder with
occasional dive-bombing
to show each other how easy it is
to slip a tongue into sweetness
while others fight for
priorities—who sips first or
longest, or who can sit
pensive without sipping
at all. They know less

about deer, their
magnetic noses trained
to the young red tips of
roses. Yet their tongue-sheath
beaks would challenge
fiercely if they caught deer
mawing the blossoms
of their honeysuckle.

The stealth-step of the deer
seems wishing not to tear
the fabric of this easing down
of night, shadow entering
shadow. And dusk, which allows
us to gaze across the boundary
of night's oncoming dream of
possessing us entirely, has enabled

the deer, in its shuttlecock moment,
to let us watch ourselves
as a soft muzzle
caresses and takes teeth
to what we've never tasted,
then be ourselves
consumed, as if night's unsheathed
allover talisman of where we came from

had entered us while a deer
and hummingbirds occupied
what must have been
the night nest of one mind
choosing not to close
until each step of the barely visible deer
has blended with the last whir
of hummingbird, vanished

Tess Gallagher is the author of ten volumes of poetry, including *Midnight Lantern: New and Selected Poems*, *Dear Ghosts*, and *Moon Crossing Bridge*. Gallagher has translated two books of poetry by Liliana Ursu, *A Path to the Sea* and *The Sky behind the Forest*. She initiated the publication of Raymond Carver's *Beginners* in the Library of America's complete collection of his stories. This poem will appear in her forthcoming book *Is, Is Not* in May 2019.