

Emily Tee

fallow deer in October

it's a brightening October morning
long green grass speckled with dew
cool under the cloud flecked sky
smell of damp soil hints at autumn
we see the big white buck first
leading his herd across the park
from our stance some saunter
some scurry and the smallest
canter to keep up the pace
when the lead males reach the river bank
they climb down and the big buck bellows
then half swims, half wades across
to climb the steep bank on the other side
he stands and shiver-flicks his coat
to shake out the river wetness
tips his head to one side then the other
emptying water from inside huge antlers
the next bucks reach him then gradually
his harem, in thrall, cross the river
some of the fawns make the best progress
elsewhere more fallow deer lie lethargic
in stealthy ones and twos under trees
except another big male, who stands aloof
puts his head back to utter a deep groan
two small yearlings with dappled rumps respond
and as they trot past us twenty feet away
one stops to stare at us - huge brown eyes
in a curious triangular face topped with
two small spikes of newly grown antlers
we stay still, stand and return the stare
they wait and watch, we watch and wait
in a park where herds of fallow deer
have roamed and rutted for centuries
we keep a respectful distance

Emily Tee recently retired from a career working with numbers. Recent poems by Emily have appeared online in *The Ekphrastic Review* and published/ forthcoming with *Dreich Magazine* and in several poetry anthologies. She lives in the United Kingdom.