

I'll always remember

by [T.C. Johnsen](#) in the [July 11, 2006](#) issue

I'll always remember
the sweltering night in Missouri,
the pulsing din of the katydids,
the prairie grass stretching away
on the other side of the trees.
In the dark woods across the pond,
a lost calf bleats its anguish—
six times, then eight, then six again.
I sit at the camp table listening,
as so many nights before. In the tent,
sleeping, the boy, now thirteen,
the woman, after twenty-seven years.
Moths and greenbugs attack the lantern,
flapping crazily. Before I finish tonight
they will land in the halo
of the hot gas light, diligently
search out the lantern's air vents
and incinerate themselves.
In the morning I will brush away
the fine white ash. This is not
a fitting metaphor
for any human aspiration.
The light we are seeking
is not the kind that destroys
those who seek it. True,
the bright burning gas
tempts us sometimes. I know, I know.
There are nights when we feel
that bad. I turn the valve of the lantern
to off and wait for my vision
to adjust to the darkness.

The almost inaudible
breathing from the tent
comforts me. I think of us
sitting on the shore
as the last sunlight seeped
from the sky, watching the boy
cast his fishing line
again and again
out into the pond, catching nothing
except happiness. The light
we are seeking catches all the world
in the shooting arc
of the outthrown line, never
to be lost, not bounded
by night, dangerous
only to death.