**Night on Spring River**

Lisa Creech Bledsoe

It was unbearably hot if you ask my mother

but I didn't know that.

We arrived in a swirl of red dust and the scent of shortleaf pine

and now my clothes were stiff, my hair water-combed into sticks

and smelling of riverbelly and bees with sun under their wings.

What I knew was that we were sleeping out by a real fire

on a riverbank at night and there was no bed, an amazement.

My father dragged our canoe out of the water,

tilted it on its side, and strung a tarp from the canoe

in a slant to the brown riversand. Beneath was a quilt.

My mother said I could be in the middle, but I wanted the edge—

we were sleeping by a river, under a canoe, next to stars,

sharp as little knives. I needed to see

the moon's violet bowl, to be brand new at the edge and end

of the world, with time a green flux singing and falling

around me in silk strings; to hear the clicking

of fancies and phantasms amid a river-wind's stir of shadow.

If such a place were possible, I might weather

the years when something closed and sealed the hidden

banks beneath my inner breath and course.

If such a bed were made, this rich draught

might show me my own way home,

as if I knew my home, my way, my own—

one night to hold open the great heart of the world

so we can heal before we die, dancing up the clouds,

climbing the smoke from our fire to another place,

stamps on letters from far away.