

# 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.