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## Child-Thoughts at Night

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## Child-Thoughts at Night

*BERNADETTE LUKASAVITZ*

"Oh, the frogs' song is all jagged like bits of broken glass," I thought. Their pipings cut the darkness. The night was deliciously cold lemonade after the hot day. I lay with my face buried in the grass, tasting and feeling the night, as dew fingers brushed across my young brown arms.

The grass was wet dark green at night. The blades were rough, and cut when you ran them the wrong way across your tongue. I rolled one between my teeth, bit and tasted the bitter wild green. Chin on the ground, lying on my stomach, I peered through the grass blades and saw a flash of fire-fly, here, then there, hang in the air.

In front of me the house reared, the black shadow of an animal. My own pretend game swept me up, and my stomach tightened in fear . . . the animal was opening one bright yellow eye, looking at me. But no, it was just a window, framing the matchflame my mother struck to light the lamp. The wick accepted the fire; she replaced the chimney and moved to draw the shade. The light made a lane across the grass and I lay at the end of it. I lay very still. She pulled the window shade down slowly without seeing me, and the yellow lane crept back across the grass and hid itself at its black edge. The eye had closed into a narrow sleepy slit.

My body was prickled by the little dead grass stalks, so I rolled over on my side, then sat up and ran my hand over the top of my bare foot. It was rough, furrowed where the hard bits of grass had pushed their impressions into the skin.

I looked a little to the left, beyond the house. The sun, after disappearing behind the trees in the west, had left a pink tinge above their black lace tops. Above that, the sky mixed blue and pink, and above that a deeper and deeper blue until the stars peeped out of black. A person could never feel alone with so many eyes watching. But they weren't eyes, they were windows, too. The windows of heaven. And angels looked out of them. Many, many windows, all across the sky. My favorite bright star was still there. I looked for it every night, and every night it looked back at me. I hugged my knees up close, twisted a little. The dew was making the night cold.

In the east, a fire began to burn slowly behind the woods. Once the woods **had** been on fire, and my father had worked with other men fighting it. But that was a long time ago and the green brush had grown again, and the big trees were beginning to hide their black scars. The fire was mounting higher, blazing from the edge of a ball . . . only the moon, nothing to be afraid of. The moon always smiled, but especially when it was just getting up. The trees were like cobwebs across its face. It didn't mind, it just kept smiling, and rising higher, getting a little smaller as it climbed.

The sound of dishes clanking and clinking came from my shadow animal, the house. Something was being cooked. Potatoes, boiling in white foam, gave off a heavy smell. Frying meat sent out a light and beckoning air. I was suddenly hungry. Then a chair scraped against the floor. The screen door's spring made a twang-twang sound as it opened, and my mother stood against the light.

"Child! Child, come and eat," her warm thick-milk voice called.

As I slipped into the light past her, her worn hand with the cooking smells all over it brushed me.

"I don't know what you find to do in the dark by yourself," she said.