

## Hidden Under Afternoon Sky

by Natalie McNabb

We sat on that bank, hiding  
under two-o'clock sky.

You bent and broke sticks.  
I played with them, too.  
Mud squished beneath our soles,  
crept up all four heels.  
Your blue corduroyed arm  
prodded my own in red fleece.  
You smiled. I could tell.  
Your voice told on you.

A fish finally flipped up, back  
down with a splash.  
Another followed shortly,  
but no more than that.

Your eyes looked sea-worn  
bottle-green in that coat  
On that day. They softened.  
You lay back.  
They closed for a nap.

I watched you sleep,  
warmed by your peace  
Against grass  
and ground.  
My arms would have woken you,  
so I breathed you in,  
Took you inside,  
held you there instead.

You at last awoke  
like spring raising  
Its head from winter:  
...so slowly...so quietly...  
Then, suddenly, all there.

The wind picked up.  
It was close to 4:00.  
We decided to leave, and  
gathered our gear.  
We left behind  
the wind-rippling pond,  
Broken sticks, and  
pressed pools of grass.  
Our shoeprints clustered  
and blended,  
Some clear and distinct,  
but all beautiful  
Left behind in the mud  
on that bank.

I carried away—  
a bit of grass in my hair,  
Some mud climbing my boots,  
but, above all,  
The musk  
of broken mud,  
The whip sound  
of wind through twigs,  
The sway  
of your sleep-breath—  
What a few broken sticks  
dug up.

~ *Virtual Writer, A Longford Literary  
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