

LYNNE KNIGHT

THE REMEDY

The last night of my visit we waited past dark to eat. The July heat still hadn't settled back into the fields, so we left the dishes for later and walked the dirt road up the mountain, past the last of the lived-in houses, into the noise of peepers and owls. It had been a hard year for my sister, and all week we'd been telling bitter stories, inventing even bitterer details, a remedy we'd learned as girls. A few stories had ironies so severe we laughed until we snorted, then weakened with relief.

There was little risk in walking the mountain that late; the road was seldom travelled after dark. Still, we talked low if we talked at all. An owl, then peepers, loud and steady. Enough moon to whiten the abandoned house at the top, where we turned back. By then I could hear my sister sighing the way she does when the unsayable lodges in her throat. I wanted to say something about the dark, how it's quicker when you're headed down into it—something to let her know

I knew the bitter stories hadn't helped. But we were almost to the houses, walking quickly to the tasks ahead, so quickly we almost missed the field seeping for miles toward mountains that were more of the field's black, black space glittering

with fireflies so that for one giddy moment the world
turned upside down, the sky
suddenly ours to walk through, unimpeded.
We plunged in. Heedless of rocks or hollows, the grass
at our legs. Of everything but space, more space,
and the stars right there at our fingers.