

## Walk with the River · *Judith Moffett*

A southbound current, strong,  
littered with leaves, slides beside me.  
I'm keeping even.  
It's October. On the bank ahead  
a cardinal lights high in a maple tree.  
I pass the tree. It blazes, in it  
the bird blazes, through it  
the sky is indigo; it's afternoon . . .

A good child  
gets taken for a walk. She wears  
brown shoes and a sweater,  
holds her father's hand and looks  
again and again to him,  
only to him:  
the powerful, patient, steady one  
who—going someplace—  
brings her along partway.  
In his mind the entire route is plain.  
He is preoccupied but kind.  
She holds his hand. They go along  
not speaking; but each time she looks  
she is reassured.

Now they come south together, through the park.  
Soon he'll recollect himself  
and send her back. She  
eyes the burnished buckeyes  
but lets them lie. Carefully  
her shoes crunch leaves. A red bird,  
burning, flies into a red tree;  
they pass the tree.