

Marianne Szlyk

Blacksmith in Nigeria

After a photograph by Sadiq Mustapha

In Lapai, city of book clubs,
a blacksmith stands barefoot
despite splinters and sharp stones
on the dirt floor. Brown toes
whiten with dust.

Humid air falls like a cloak
around the blacksmith's shoulders.
He wears thrift store khakis
to ward off the open fire's sparks.
He makes hoes and adzes,

sometimes guns. Houses and shops,
vines and trees with vast leaves
crowd along the paved road
to the capitol. Women and children
sell clothes Americans wore.

Marianne Szlyk's poems have appeared in *Bourgeon*, *Red Eft Review*, *Trouvaille Review*, *Verse-Virtual*, *Mad Swirl* and *Muddy River Poetry Review* as well as the anthology *The Forgotten River*. Her full-length book *Poetry en Plein Air* is available on Amazon and at Pony One Dog Press.