

CARTOGRAPHY

by Elizabeth J. Colen

You are six years old. Your brother is blind. Your brother is blind with his hands over his eyes. Your brother is not really blind. The divorce has done this to him. Dust and sadness has done this to him. Motion sickness has done this to him. And the sun in his eyes. He wants to be blind. He wants to be you. In the front seat: you. Hands in your lap. You make a strangling motion, twisting your pants at the knees. Your mother in the driver's seat beside you doesn't know the pant legs are her, the bunched-up fabric her throat. Brother strops his hand in his lap every time a locust exoskeleton breaks on the windshield, irregular beats, but often. It is *that* year. You are escaping. You are escaping joy and the reaching fingers of the boy next door. You are escaping your father locked out of the house, his palm drumming your bedroom window. To be let in is to give in. It means you've done wrong. Open the map. Let the paper cut your palm. Mother blinks too often. Put your hand on the dashboard, redsmear. This is where we're going. Put your hand on her wrist. Put your hand on the wheel.

