

# MAPS

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I've spent much of my life  
turning around, retracing my steps.  
I can't read maps very well and  
following them is even more of a challenge.  
When I first got behind the wheel,  
the driver's ed instructor told me  
to drive to the grocery store  
in the next town over,  
about ten minutes away.  
I asked her which way to go.  
You have lived here sixteen years and  
don't know how to get to the grocery store?

I was looking at the hemlock trees  
that line the street, noticing the way I could  
see a transparent version of myself in the glass,  
looking to see if the blue heron had returned  
to the pond we ice skated on every winter.  
I was looking at the way smoke weaves  
into the sky as it comes out of chimneys,  
trying to find a good song on the radio,  
watching dogs and bicycles and lawn mowers.  
I wasn't paying attention to where we were going.

But I've always loved maps.  
In elementary school, when I got off the bus,  
I grabbed my snack and sat at the kitchen table,  
spinning my parents' globe,  
watching the tilt of the axis,  
figuring out how to get from here  
to somewhere else.

On Sunday afternoons, I pulled out the World Atlas  
from the dark wooden bookshelf in the living room.  
Awkwardly carrying the oversize book in my arms,  
I put it on the rug and lay on my stomach,  
feeling the sun on my shoulders  
through the huge south facing windows.  
Moving my fingers over places I couldn't pronounce,  
I flipped through the book slowly.  
I floated down rivers, traipsed over mountains,  
and hopped from country to country, city to city,  
pausing over small towns and fishing villages  
and islands that seemed lonely  
in the best way.

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