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Exodus

Michael Hicks

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Exodus

We drift apart like continents.
 Our shores rearrange
 themselves in awkward lines,
 successive drafts in
 the revision of the world
 we made for ourselves.
 My mother drew maps
 for sixteen years, holding
 a magnifying glass in one hand
 and with the other tracing
 the signatures of the planet,
 rivers and railroads,
 highways and city limits.
 Now I can only imagine her hand
 brushing the erasures of
 our landscape, smoothing
 the fault lines between us
 just as she smoothed the pages
 of her bible every night,
 leafing through them by
 the moon at her nightstand.
 I think she would understand
 when I say that this parting
 is our Red Sea, the open gate
 to a wilderness we might walk
 forty years without a map,
 every inch at least a mile.
 Like Israelites we will wander
 the counties just outside
 the promised land, all the while
 asking what pillar of smoke led us here,
 how a rose can blossom into desert,
 or why we must be chosen
 but still lost.

—Michael Hicks

This poem won third place in the *BYU Studies* 2001 poetry contest.