

Someone With Keys

by Elizabeth J. Colen

We wait for someone with keys. The dry grass, ankle-deep, is pocked brown with rotting apples. "An orchard," you say to me or to the two trees. A bee examines one sweet corpse, feet settling in sickly syrup. Across the street a mower chokes out, starts up again. The man handling it could be thirty, could be sixty, could be your father back from the dead. Mower hits a rock and the blades scream. The man looks which way the rock went and mows down iris. Eye god in the nursed dirt, purple explodes in the bed. The wife looks from the window, glances over at us, pulls the curtain. "Friendly." I smile, but you don't notice. I look at your hands, which are soft and nothing like his. You fidget again, pulling a leaf off the tree. You frayed the map the whole way here, determined turns while I took my time at the wheel. "Can you go faster?" I pushed my heel in for the speed up, but knew we'd be early. Like most things, this was your call. I turned the radio loud. Bob Dylan, like an angel of mercy came on, singing something we both knew. Now your hands fondle the gate latch, fold tree leaves into squares, then back to the latch. "I like what your voice does when you don't know the words," I say. But you probably don't hear me. Your face follows a truck as it turns up the street, approaches, then sails past. The first night we stay here we will push what's left of your father's things into the back yard, we will watch bats circle the trees.

