

Making a Fist By Naomi Shihab Nye

For the first time, on the road north of Tampico,
I felt the life sliding out of me,
a drum in the desert, harder and harder to hear.
I was seven, I lay in the car
watching palm trees swirl a sickening pattern past the
glass.

My stomach was a melon split wide inside my skin.

“How do you know if you are going to die?”

I begged my mother.

We had been traveling for days.

With strange confidence she answered,

“When you can no longer make a fist.”

Years later I smile to think of that journey,
the borders we must cross separately,
stamped with our unanswerable woes.

I who did not die, who am still living,
still lying in the backseat behind all my questions,
clenching and opening one small hand.