

CAROLINE HARPER NEW

# LOOM

I used to have a house

full of sisters and a dress that smelled  
like oranges. I used to have a braid

for every hand in my hair. My fingers  
twitch when I forget and my last sister spits

on my baby hairs before school. She yanks me  
into her dress and fumbles into our mother's.

Not the green one. Do I remember? Smell  
can summon memories

that otherwise would die. The neighbors didn't want  
the stench of my hand-me-downs

so I set the dress on fire. It burned a thick green flame  
in the roof. I burned the house to the ground

with our father inside. Do you remember?  
I burned our father to the ground

with myself inside. My mother inside. My sister  
says every time a memory is recalled

it shifts: a shadow turns sister, a sister turns river  
and vice versa. A hand on a knife—

vice versa, vice versa. A kaleidoscope is just mirrors  
and a hand to keep it spinning. My sister says my fingers twitch.

# MY LOVE FOR GEOGRAPHY IS AN ACT OF MOURNING

Bereaved  
is more forgiving than bereft,  
leaves me

between daughter & water  
up to my knees—maybe

you looked back  
for me, but I was already

here.  
I am

up to my chin.  
I feel your fingers  
jerk my scalp into  
braids. Slap my cheeks  
when I stole the sweets  
& you sent me to fetch more  
sugar. The sting that never left

the womb. The wound, I hold

in my body.  
I'm not scared.

I hear how  
the waves have  
your voice.

They say I have your eyes.