

KATHERINE SMITH

## Tangerine

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The private moments of Jesus  
come to Laura in a dream  
she jerks awake from as if in a free fall,  
body curled around her goose-down pillow,  
head throbbing. Once, in Appalachia  
Laura saw a woman throw  
a shuttle across a loom,  
sway back and forth  
as a few inches of the cloth's stylized pattern  
took shape slowly as the latticed shadows of trees  
across the wall of her bedroom at dawn.  
The lamp on the night table still on,  
her memory reaches back like a child's hand  
into a bag of candy to extract a sweet.  
Laura sits up, sips a glass of water,  
comforted by the thought of nurses, firemen,  
waitresses serving bitter coffee, tender doughnuts  
at all night cafes not far from her house.  
She wants the smallest saviors:  
china plate of fruit, vanilla  
scented lotion, glass of water  
on the bedside table. Tonight Laura's  
children breathe in their bedrooms,  
beautiful, trusting, their need for her  
almost outgrown. Finished  
with raising them this evening,  
Laura smooths cream into her throat,  
swallows a section of tangerine.